

INSIDE! THE MATRIX • GRAVITY • ALIENS • EDGE OF TOMORROW • SPIDER-MAN  
BLADE RUNNER • LOOPER • MINORITY REPORT • STAR TREK • MANY MORE!

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

# SCI-FI MOVIES

THE  
**50** GREATEST  
SCI-FI MOVIES!

ALL THE FILMS YOU MUST SEE!

FROM THE  
MAKERS OF  
**TOTAL  
FILM  
AND  
SFX**

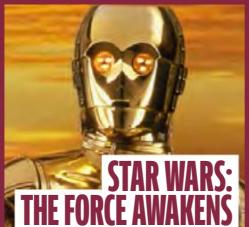
FEATURING

## GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

HOW IT BECAME A  
WORLDWIDE SMASH!

PLUS!

SUPersonic  
**2015**  
PREVIEW



STAR WARS:  
THE FORCE AWAKENS



JUPITER  
ASCENDING



AVENGERS:  
AGE OF ULTRON



MAD MAX:  
FURY ROAD

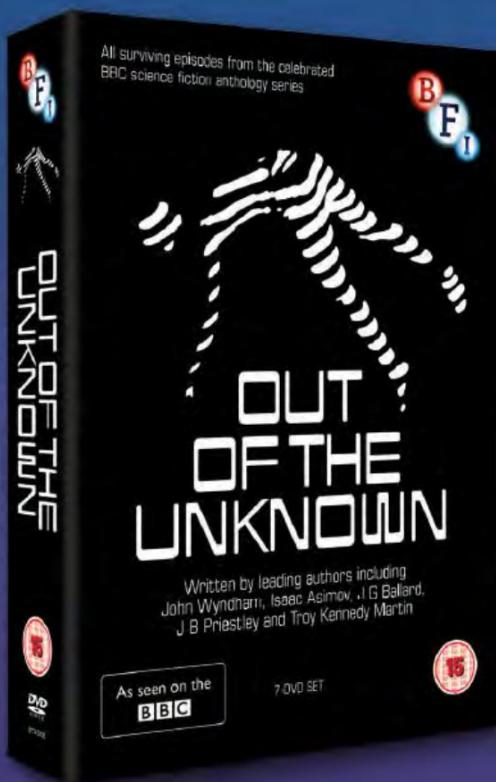


TERMINATOR:  
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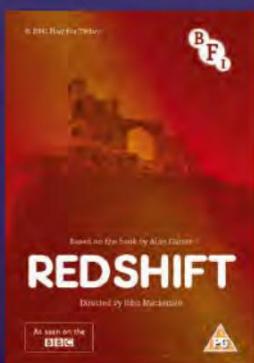
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# Greetings!

Why does the world need another magazine about the greatest ever science fiction movies?

Because the “best” sci-fi movies are ever changing. Because it’s still the biggest genre there is. Because you can never have too much of the likes of *Star Wars*, *The Terminator*, *RoboCop*, *Back To The Future*, *Jurassic Park* and scores of others. So what we’ve tried to do in this special is bring you quality features on the 50 greatest sci-fi flicks out there, making sure we’ve got a rich mix of the best pieces that have adorned the pages of *Total Film* and *SFX*.

We’ve got retro features, personal reminiscences, contemporary set visits and plenty of fun stuff. There’s also a look ahead to some of the sci-fi that’ll be coming your way in 2015 – turn to page 136 for the first of our gazes into the future. These enticing previews give us the sure-fire hope that sci-fi will continue to be the genre of choice for armies of moviegoers, while also clocking up a true masterwork now and then.

So enjoy basking in our celebration of silver screen sci-fi, and if you haven’t yet seen all of these 50 flicks – well, what are you waiting for? (But don’t forget to come back to these pages the second you have!)

**RUSSELL LEWIN, EDITOR**

THE KOBAL COLLECTION



# THE 50 GREATEST SCI-FI MOVIES EVER MADE

Counting down the films that rule our universe, from *Edge Of Tomorrow* to... well, we wouldn't want to spoil it

Three years ago *Total Film* asked readers to vote on their all-time favourite science fiction films. The result was a list of 50 marvellous movies that no true fan should leave unticked. But the clock keeps on moving, so we've decided to update the list, mostly to include some excellent movies that have been released since 2011 – so a big hello to the likes of *Gravity*, *Looper* and *Edge Of Tomorrow* – and

some which just missed the cut previously (we've also allowed sci-fi based superhero movies in for the first time). Feel free to laud or blame the *Total Film/SFX* hive mind for the selections. But whatever your opinions of this list, which has bubbled and re-shaped in our big science fiction cauldron, we hope you'll enjoy perusing it.

And so, without further ado: let's go!

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RUSSELL LEWIN, MATTHEW  
LEYLAND, JAMES MOTTRAM,  
JAYNE NELSON, JAMIE RUSSELL  
& NEIL SMITH

## 50 EDGE OF TOMORROW 2014

Just when you thought there was nothing new to squeeze out of the *Groundhog Day* scenario (almost every TV sci-fi show ever seems to have had a go), along comes *Bourne* director Doug Liman with a witty, clever, action-packed twist on the genre. Newly demoted Private Cage (Tom Cruise) has to relive the same battle against aliens multiple times until he defeats them. He must feel like he's in the most realistic videogame ever, dying over and over again and going back to the Save Point.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** The first beach battle; it's *Saving Private Ryan* meets *Starship Troopers*.

Read more on page 50



## 49 YELLOW SUBMARINE 1968

Paul McCartney wasn't terribly keen on animated feature *Yellow Submarine* when he first saw it; in the intervening years he's come to view it more favourably. No wonder: it showcases the best British animators of the time, their work flavoured by the infectious attitudes of the Fab Four and soundtracked by their peerless tunes. The Beatles' journey to rid Pepperland of the irksome Blue Meanies is also a wonderful adventure, a psychedelic trip sweetened for the young and old – and everyone in between.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** Who can resist either the sugar-shoot chorus or visual imagery of "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds"?

Read more on page 114

## 48 WESTWORLD 1973

*Jurassic Park* author Michael Crichton also directed six films, and exciting Western-cum-sci-fi thriller *Westworld* is the best. The story of what happens when a futuristic amusement park goes horribly wrong and the realistic robots start killing the guests, it's a world that seems just five minutes ahead of our own – a frequent Crichton trait. And once you've seen it, you'll realise the debt that James Cameron's *Terminator 2* owes to it.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** Brynner's gunslinger almost down, but not quite out, still with murder in his eyes, marching onwards.

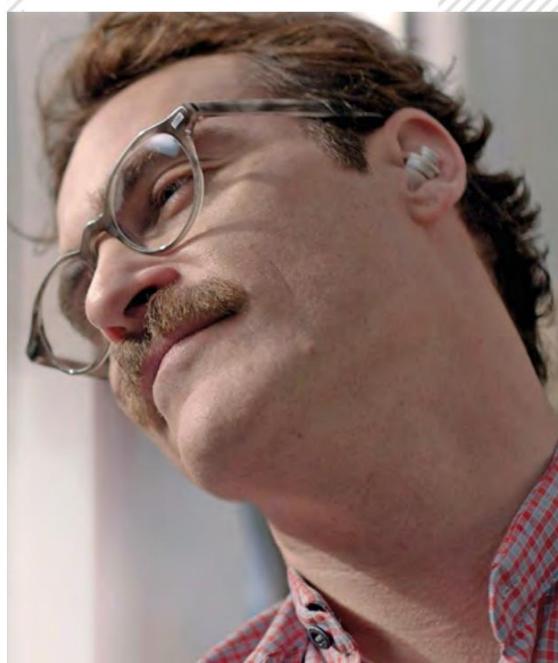
Read more on page 119

## 47 HER 2013

Sad? Lonely? Suffering from existential angst and depression brought on from true love turning sour? Then why not form a relationship with your AI operating system and discover that the world doesn't revolve around you (because there's no U in AI OS, geddit?). Director Spike (*Being John Malkovich*) Jonze's virtual relationship flick is like Woody Allen for the social media generation.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** OS Samantha reveals to a distraught Theodore that she's in love with 641 people at the same time.

Read more on page 110



**46** X-MEN 2 2003

The second *X-Men* movie contains so many criss-crossing storylines, it's near impossible to summarise, except as a mosaic of stand-out moments: Nightcrawler's attack on the White House; Magneto's ingenious escape from a plastic prison; Stryker's forces attacking the School For Gifted Youngsters; Jean Grey drowning. Just a few of the pure comic book moments director Bryan Singer brings to screen with a breathtaking panache, setting a new standards for screen superheroics. **OUT OF THIS WORLD** Nightcrawler teleports into the oval office. Bampf! Bampf! Bampf!

Read more on page 36

**45** A.I. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE 2001

Who did what? For too long, debate around Spiel-brick's Brian Aldiss adap has argued that Stevie cooked up the mush, Stanley the meanness. But that over-simplifies the rich blur of cool intellect and warm longing in this tale of a boy-bot's desire for life. As US critic Jonathan Rosenbaum said, *A.I.* generates "an ambiguity where the bleakest pessimism and the most ecstatic feelgood enchantment swiftly alternate and even occasionally merge". Look at the much-maligned ending's flash of bliss: sweet yet brief. *A.I.* illuminates tensions of thought and feeling, of heart and mind plugged into a core sci-fi beard-tugger: what makes us human?

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** An *E.T.*-style moon segues to raptor-jawed bikes hunting Mechas.

Read more on page 102

**44** UNDER THE SKIN 2013

A film which viewers seemed either to laud as a masterpiece or brand pretentious drivel: in truth it's probably closer to the former, a strange, opaque piece boasting fine cinematography, a shiversome score and a bold lead performance from Scarlet Johansson as the alien who seduces then devours fortunate/unfortunate Scottish males. What's undeniable is that it stays with you (some scenes, like those on the beach, are supremely chilling). But perhaps the ultimate verdict on this arty sci-fi treatise on the human condition can't be delivered for another 20 years or so, when we've had the chance to rewatch and rethink many times.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** Scarlet's victims sink down into a weird black, syrupy void as they approach her, still visibly aroused.

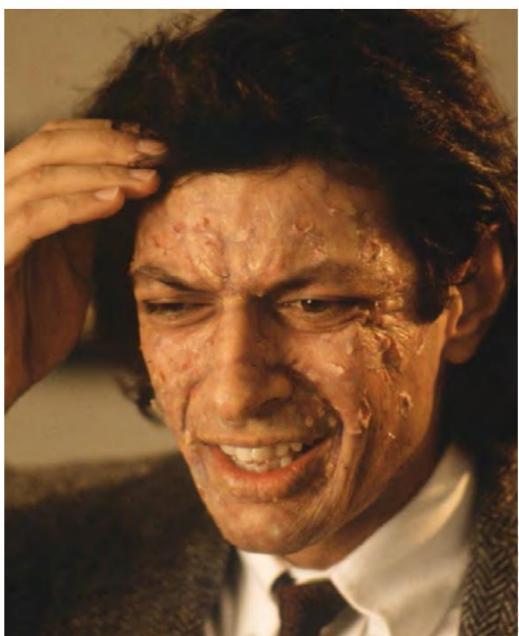
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**43** GODZILLA 1954

A post-Hiroshima Japanese film industry poured all of its neuroticism into a beast roused from its oceanic slumber by nuclear weapons testing. OK, so it would've been obvious even in the '50s that Gojira is a man in a suit, but it's the way that suit moves, plus the monster's roar and the destruction it wreaks that make this the greatest creature feature of the decade.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** Our first glimpse of Godzilla swaggering out of the sea to stomp over Tokyo.

Read more on page 70

**42** 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA 1954

Disney created steampunk decades before the term had even been coined with the rivet-punched Victorian splendour of the Nautilus in this elegant adaptation of Jules Verne's classic sub-aquatic science fiction novel. With James Mason marvellously hamming it up as Captain Nemo and Kirk Douglas as an unashamedly square-jawed hero, Disney turned the tale into a pure *Boy's Own* adventure, but a rattlingly good one.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** Giant octopus attacks the Nautilus! Man overboard!

Read more on page 62

**41** GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY 2014

In 1978 we were asked to believe a man could fly. By 2014 superhero movies were asking us to believe a tree could walk and a raccoon could talk. *Guardians Of The Galaxy* was the funniest Marvel movie, boasting a whole host of quirky, endearing characters. The fact that it was also the most spectacular and fresh-feeling space opera since *A New Hope* was a mere bonus.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** Peter Quill dancing across an alien planet, singing along to "Come And Get Your Love" by Redbone at the start of the film. It sets the tone perfectly.

Read more on page 34

**40** THE FLY 1986

No one does body-horror like Canadian director David Cronenberg – and never more glopily than in this accomplished and commercially successful remake of a 1958 Vincent Price vehicle. Scientist Jeff Goldblum teleports himself but a fly hitches a ride, and starts colonising his DNA. A metaphor for Aids/cancer/the ageing process? Sure – but laced with deliciously dark humour as Goldblum's delight in his new strength mixes with horror at his disintegration.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** As Goldblum gazes transfixed into the mirror at what he's become, his ear falls off.

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# THE GREATEST

## 39 INDEPENDENCE DAY 1996

There's no missing the ETs in Roland Emmerich's epic, arriving in saucers big enough to block out the sun. And there's no mistaking their intentions either, once their cannons start zapping at New York, Washington and LA. Take away all the destruction though, and you have a '50s creature feature, retooled with gung-ho jingoism and cocksure swagger.

"Welcome to Earth!" Will Smith punches an alien in the face.  
Read more on page 84

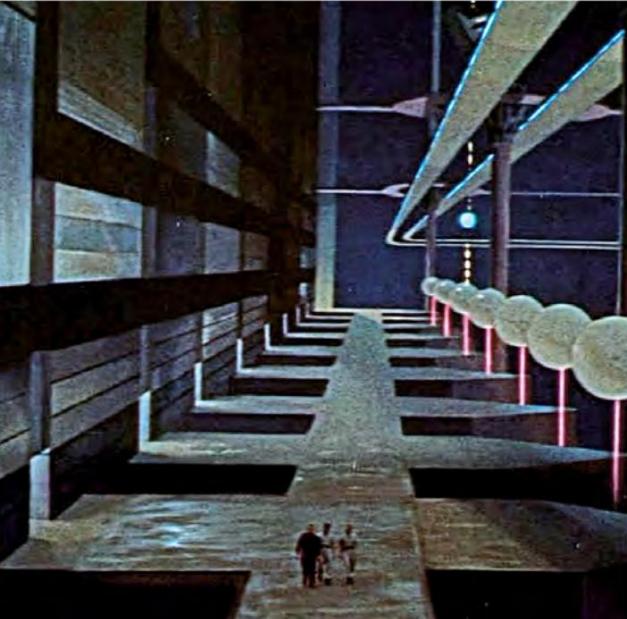


## 38 FORBIDDEN PLANET 1956

Story by Shakespeare. Themes by Freud. And yet still considered schlock by some thanks to Leslie Nielsen's subsequent career. But Fred M. Wilcox's widescreen epic about a rescue mission to lost colony Altair IV deserves better, as it's a landmark for big-concept science fiction. Influential design is backed by a plot based on *The Tempest* and a raging Id villain. Forbidden fruit, indeed.

Hollywood ditches the orchestral score for surprising avant-garde "electronic tonalities".

Read more on page 146



## 37 MOON 2009

Made in the tradition of *Dark Star*, *Silent Running* and *Solaris*, Duncan Jones' debut came out of an indie wormhole to deliver a beguiling slice of lunar-cy. Harvesting solar energy from the moon, Sam Rockwell's lone astronaut Sam Bell is light years from home and his sanity, with only HAL-like robot GERTY (Kevin Spacey) for company. Co-written with Nathan Parker, the plotting is corkscrew. Jones calls it "a story built on hard science fiction" – present-day ideas (cloning, genetics) smartly woven into the film's fabric. Like the featured Chesney Hawkes song says, this really is a one and only.

In the damaged space-rover, Sam Bell rolls over a body – himself.  
Read more on page 26



## 36 SPIDER-MAN 2002

Bucking the trend for summer blockbusters being a case of "great FX, shame about the story" Sam Raimi's first Spidey movie was a triumph of character, humour and charm over some downright dodgy CG sequences. This was a superhero movie that went to the heart of what '60s Marvel was all about; regular human beings dealing with small personal problems as well as big supervillains. Tobey Maguire was perfectly cast as the geek with great responsibilities, and Willem Dafoe made a menacing Norman Osborn.

Sorry to get soppy, but the upside-down kiss that Spidey gives Mary Jane. It's a classic.

Read more on page 42

## 34 LOOPER 2012

Even in a genre renowned for plot loopholes, *Looper* attains new levels of loopiness – and director Rian Johnson happily admits that. The key to this time travel film's success is... you don't care. Just like you don't care that Bruce Willis and Joseph Gordon-Levitt barely look like father and son, let alone the same person from different points in time, the elder having travelled back in time to be assassinated by the younger. Paradox minefield ahoy! But it's all massive fun and fiendishly clever, and the second half goes in directions you're not expecting.

A man's limbs vanish before his eyes as bad guys cut them off his past self.

Read more on page 53

## 35 SUPERMAN 1978

From the first time that we hear that now famous fanfare to the final image of Superman in space, ready to protect Earth from all-comers (little did he know...), *Superman* is a pitch-perfect, tinglingly respectful adaptation, which helped transform the Man of Steel from a comic book icon into a modern myth. The three-act structure (Krypton/Kansas/Metropolis) feels almost operatic and Christopher Reeve doesn't play Superman, he channels him, like a force of nature. We bet it'll still be the definitive portrayal 100 years from now.

Superman swoops in to save a plummeting Lois Lane. "I've got you." "You've got me? Who's got you?"

Read more on page 40



**33** **STARSHIP TROOPERS** 1995

Or: "All Quiet On The Final Frontier", as fresh-faced kids who look like rejects from *Saved By The Bell* join the army to wage war on an alien planet populated by deadly Arachnids. "Of course, the movie is about 'Let's all go to war and let's all die!'" explains director Paul Verhoeven cheerfully. "War makes fascists of us all." Simultaneously exemplifying and satirising Hollywood cinema (while outrageously skewering America with Nazi iconography), Verhoeven's multi-levelled soap opera is so shockingly violent, subversive, exciting and funny that you almost can't believe they let him get away with it.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** Casper van Dien's "hero" shot after single-handedly blowing up a bug.

[Read more on page 90](#)

**32** **SOLARIS** 1972

For Andrei Tarkovsky, the journey out there mattered less than the journey inwards. Responding to Kubrick's *2001*, the Russian heavyweight drew a humanist fable from Stanislaw Lem's novel. On a space station, a cosmonaut sees his late wife, prompting meditations on love, loss and morality. Space exploration mirrors humanity's search for itself with the power of *Vertigo*. Steven Soderbergh's 2002 take on the story doesn't get close.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** Earthly wonders in the prologue. [Read more on page 16](#)

**31** **BRAZIL** 1985

Refractions Orwell's 1984 through his own visual imagination, Terry Gilliam sets his cruelly funny dystopia in a retrofuture "that was regressive but not efficient...". Jonathan Pryce tussles with stagnant bureaucracy and plumbing while living a dream life as a winged superhero battling a steel samurai. Frank Capra meets Franz Kafka - with input from Walter Mitty.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** A gently-spoken, loving family man (Michael Palin) is the state torturer...

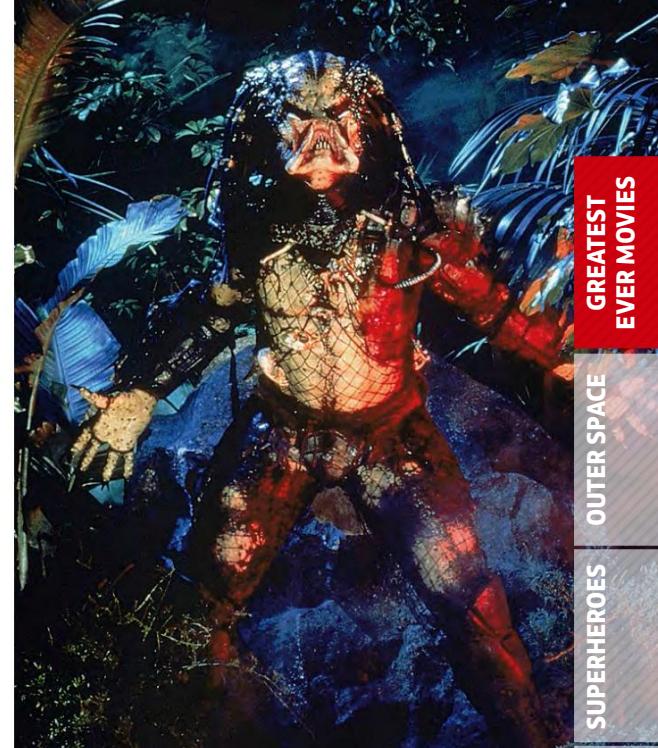
[Read more on page 98](#)

**30** **STAR TREK** 2009

After six TV series and 10 movies, surely Gene Roddenberry's mission had reached its final frontier? Not if you're J.J. Abrams, who beamed down a reboot set to stun. Previously un-Enterprising audiences were mind-melded with a warp factor 9 cast (Chris Pine, Zachary Quinto). Hardcore Trekkies, meanwhile, got a get-out clause from Abrams' twists. Incidentally, in a parallel universe, *The Wrath Of Khan* makes this list.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** Kirk takes the Captain's seat after provoking Spock into decking him.

[Read more on page 22](#)

**29** **PREDATOR** 1987

Led by an oiled-up Arnie, a macho commando team fall prey to an alien hunter. Preferring suspense to all-out action, the atmosphere is as claustrophobic as the jungle backdrop, with director John McTiernan borrowing from Ridley Scott's *Alien* playbook with the slow-reveal of the Predator. Featuring creature work from Stan Winston, the finale is wonderful primal carnage.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** Bill Duke fires his beloved mini-gun in blind panic. [Read more on page 76](#)

**28** **GRAVITY** 2013

*Gravity* is pure cinema. It's spectacle over storytelling to the extent that what little "human" story there is (stranded astronaut Sandra Bullock getting a bizarre pep talk towards the end) feels shoehorned in. Make no mistake, it was the special effects, vertiginous direction, edge-of-seat tension and (finally) decent use of 3D that made this a worldwide smash. And that's what makes cinema cinema, as opposed to TV.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** A dizzying 13-minute long opening shot in space that moves from casual camaraderie and high spirits to terrifying tragedy.

[Read more on page 12](#)

**27** **MINORITY REPORT** 2002

Spielberg's visions went "dark" during the noughties, shading trademark thrills with cerebral sci-fi. Take his Philip K. Dick adap about pre-cogs who predict crime: at once a Tom Cruise chase thriller and a murky morality tale. The masterstroke is the world-building achieved by a specialist think tank, who extrapolated trends to invent gizmos like "sick sticks" for crowd control.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** Spider-bots (another futuristic think tank creation) go hunting for Cruise.

[Read more on page 100](#)

# THE GREATEST



## 26 AKIRA 1988

Three decades after World War Three in a neon-rinsed Tokyo of 2019, a teen biker crashes into a wizened child and begins to transform into a tentacled monster that threatens to trigger another Armageddon... While *Akira*'s brain-warping ideas and energy just keep pulsating, Katsuhiro Otomo's mind-blower is also a unique cosmic parable about growing pains.

Violent, stylish early biker battles racing through the streets of Tokyo.  
Read more on page 116

## 25 THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL 1951

An alien emissary travels 250m miles to Earth to preach love and peace – only to get shot by an American soldier with an itchy trigger finger. Robert Wise's B&W classic still moves thanks to its Christian allegory and its tense alien landing sequence as Klaatu (Michael Rennie) arrives. Best of all is robot Gort, a sci-fi icon to file alongside Robbie and R2-D2.

Gort vaporising tanks and rifles with his laser beams.  
Read more on page 105

## 24 WALL-E 2008

When Pixar auteur Andrew Stanton showed the first reels of *WALL-E* to his peers, director Brad Bird told him: "You didn't make it easy for yourself." Opening with no dialogue or human characters, *WALL-E* is a 'bot love story between trash-compactor WALL-E and the iPod-white EVE, the robot sent to search a depopulated Earth for vegetative life. It's a charming romance but it's also great science fiction. Its cute 'toon characters are part of a bigger story about the dangers of consumerism and technology, a dystopian sci-fi parable cunningly disguised as a summer kids' flick. Pixar takes animation into the final frontier: a sci-fi movie so powerful, you forget it's a cartoon.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** WALL-E's space flight with only a fire extinguisher for jet propulsion.

Read more on page 117



## 23 A CLOCKWORK ORANGE 1971

Swap Anthony Burgess' sociopaths for hoodies, and Kubrick's satire on crime, punishment and brainwashing might almost be a documentary. Has society finally caught up with its caustic portrait of a lawless alt-Britain, cankered by random thuggery? "When it first came out it was revolutionary," says Malcolm McDowell. "But everything it said has come true." We're not sure about *everything*, but we take his point.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** Home invasion to the tune of "Singin' In The Rain". Gene Kelly wasn't happy.

Read more on page 94

## 22 ROBOCOP 1987

"It's fascism for liberals," explains producer Jon Davison of Paul Verhoeven's gleefully un-PC comic-book satire. Depicting a hellish Detroit of the future where Peter Weller's Terminator/Dirty Harry hybrid is required to keep the streets free of scum, it pulls off the neat trick of criticising the ruthless machines of commerce while fetishising ruthless machines. It's proof that highly intelligent films can also be ones that enthrall the punter chiefly seeking ammunition-based thrills.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** ED-209 makes a suspect spill his guts. By machine gun.

Read more on page 80

## 21 ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND 2004

Charlie Kaufman's Oscar-winning script is a thing of melancholic beauty, but factor in Michel Gondry's mind-bending visuals and Jim Carrey and Kate Winslet's understated turns as a couple out to erase the memories of their romance, and this is sci-fi at its most sublime. The tech may be low-fi but the ride into Carrey's brain boggles.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** Memories colliding, it rains on Joel and Clem – in their apartment.  
Read more on page 120



## 20 INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS 1978

There really should be an *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers* for every generation. The '50s version – which very narrowly misses out on a place in this top 50 countdown – was an allegory for fears about creeping communism, while this '70s remake feels more concerned with post-Watergate paranoia about what goes on behind closed doors in corridors of power. But what most viewers recall is the chilling way pod people point and scream at non-converts. A taut, bleak and stylish science fiction thriller.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** An alien pod-dog with a human face.  
Read more on page 126



## 18

**JURASSIC PARK** 1993

Having already had theme-park robots go wild in *Westworld*, it was a small jump for author Michael Crichton to replay the same scenario with dinos in his 1990 bestseller. Yet it took a quantum leap for Steven Spielberg to bring them to the screen, original plans to use animatronics superseded by groundbreaking CGI which helped turn this tale of the risks of DNA-tampering into a pounding adventure that felt real enough to touch. "When you are putting dinosaurs back on earth, the audience has to believe," explains Spielberg. "And an audience will buy into the most far-fetched fantasy if it's done seriously."



The ominous ripples in the water-glass that signal T-rex's arrival.

[Read more on page 58](#)



## 17

**PLANET OF THE APES** 1968

Long before the sequels, TV series and remakes, Charlton Heston's time-travelling astronaut was stranded on an Earth ruled by apes. Released in 1968, this lean thriller packs big topics – civil rights, prejudice – into its B-movie wraparound. Heston's performance, with the Oscar-winning monkey masks, makes this a brilliant example of "What If?" sci-fi.



The Statue of Liberty twist: "God damn you all to hell!"

[Read more on page 108](#)

## 19

**DONNIE DARKO** 2001

Teenage angst is rarely more pronounced than in Richard Kelly's fine debut feature, one that he's struggled to live up to ever since. Jake Gyllenhaal is disturbed Donnie, hung up on time travel and hallucinating a 6ft rabbit who tells him the end of the world is nigh. Throw in arson, hypnosis, sleepwalking and alternative timelines for a tantalising Möbius-strip of a movie that spins off questions and never stops for answers.



A plane engine crashes into Donnie's bedroom, missing him – or does it?

[Read more on page 132](#)

## 16

**THE THING** 1982

The '80s original was a masterpiece of paranoid cinema. Carpenter's '82 remake swaps politics for the body, as an alien shape-shifter chews through an Antarctic outpost. Latex prosthetics from Rob Bottin add yuck to the body horror as the creature turns its hosts inside out. It's the anti-*E.T.* (released the same year) and the ultimate sci-fi meat movie.



The jagged chest cavity that bites off a defibrillating doc's arms.

[Read more on page 68](#)

## 15

**CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND** 1977

Spielberg's hymn to cinematic awe transforms us all into Roy Neary – slack-jawed and wonder-struck. Neary's UFO dreams and fractured family provide hooks; and you don't need to believe in aliens to feel your faith renewed in cinema's ability to conjure epiphanies with the force of religious revelation.



As the mothership descends, those five notes shake the speakers. We believe!

[Read more on page 15](#)

## 14

**AVATAR** 2009

Fourteen years and more than a quarter of a billion dollars later... Jim Cameron's 3D spectacular retells an age-old fable with new dazzle as crippled marine Sam Worthington gets the blues with native Na'vi Zoe Saldana on distant planet Pandora. Visually wondrous, emotionally pure, bloody exciting and worthy of the compliment "Dances With Aliens", it will be followed by not one but *three* sequels from Big Jim. If only they'd persuaded Costner to play one of the Na'vi...



Tiny, glowing sprites land on Jake in the forest.

[Read more on page 25](#)

## 13

**THE TRUMAN SHOW** 1998

Future cultural historians may find it difficult to believe that *The Truman Show* predates the first series of *Big Brother*. This sharp, funny and poignant film about a man who unknowingly lives his entire life out in front of TV cameras on an elaborate set should have been a warning against the gross excesses of reality TV, but instead just feels scarily prophetic. George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* may still be in the future, but *The Truman Show* seems worryingly here to stay.



Truman sails off into the horizon, then bumps into it and climbs up it.

[Read more on page 128](#)

## 12

**INCEPTION** 2010

"The potential of the human mind is infinite, so the scale of the film has to feel the same," said writer/director Chris Nolan of his magnum opus. With a \$160m budget, an Oscar-bothering international cast and a shoot spanning four continents, he succeeded beyond anyone's wildest imaginations. Leonardo DiCaprio and co are "extractors", conducting corporate espionage from inside their victim's dreams – a colossal concept played out on a multilayered mental battlefield homaging the best blockbusters (*The Matrix*'s anti-gravity fights, Bond's snowy shootouts).



A Paris of the mind pivots impossibly onto itself.

[Read more on page 88](#)

## 11

**THE TERMINATOR** 1984

Surging forward through what feels like one long night, James Cameron's full debut could be the perfect sci-fi thriller. Glinting black wit, tech-noir visuals, visceral action... And, most of all, emotional performances from Linda Hamilton and Michael Biehn as mankind's saviours on the run from Arnie's cyborg.



A shootout/chase in the TechNoir nightclub that just doesn't quit.

[Read more on page 56](#)



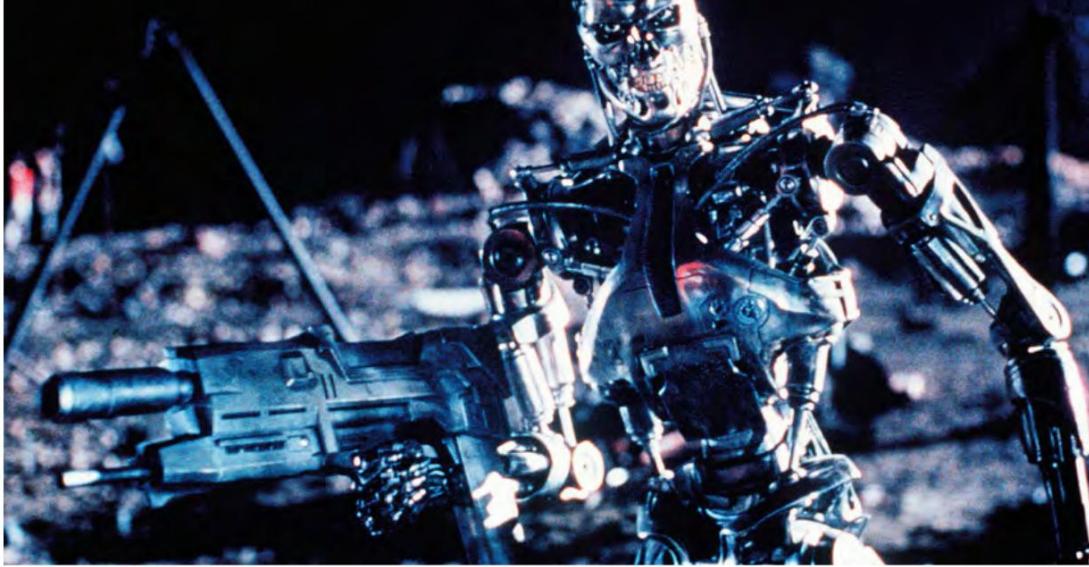
# THE GREATEST

**10****TERMINATOR 2: JUDGMENT DAY** 1991

Eighteen years before *Avatar*, Jim Cameron stormed multiplexes with this \$102m sci-fi juggernaut that refused to settle for anything resembling second place. Arnie's back as the T-800 cyborg, while Robert Patrick's liquid-metal 'bot brings the pain. State of the art CGI left audiences picking their jaws off the floor: "If the 800 is a human Panzer tank," said Cameron, "then the 1000 series had to be a Porsche".

The T1000 having his head blown apart then merging back together. Wow.

Read more on page 44

**09****THE MATRIX** 1999

As Keanu Reeves's hacker realises real isn't real, most other action science fiction pictures suddenly seemed insubstantial in comparison. The Wachowskis' smash hit was the bar-raising late-'90s genre pic. The premise? Paranoid noir. The rest? A brain-mash of bullet time, Baudrillard, body horror and Buddhism. High on chutzpah, the Wachowskis made these sources seem new, and audiences loved them for it.

"Guns. Lots of guns." Locked and (down)loaded, Keanu busts blocks...

Read more on page 124

**08****ALIENS** 1986

What's scarier than one Alien? A million of them, of course... James Cameron maxes out the original in this balls-to-the-wall sequel, a deep-coded allegory about United States marines overwhelmed by a superior force ("Vietnam in space"). He also nails the sexual dread: the original's reproductive horror given extra dimension by the maternal relationship between Ripley's ass-kicking future feminist icon and kiddie survivor Newt.

The finale's Ripley vs Alien Queen power-loader bitch fight. Smackdown!

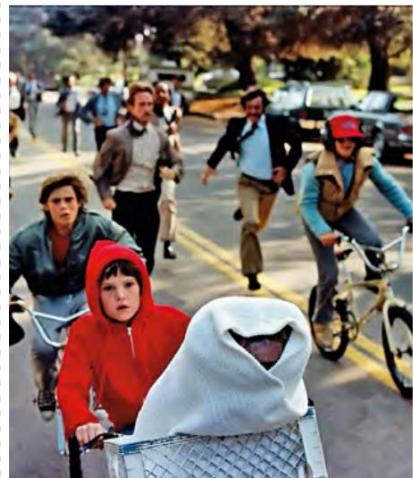
Read more on page 31

**07****E.T.: THE EXTRA TERRESTRIAL** 1982

Spielberg's touch has never been more magical than in this wondrous family drama, in which a lonely boy befriends an alien from outer space. Perceived by Spielberg (and a nervous Universal) as a "personal project", it took \$793m at the intergalactic box office. How did what looks like a turtle crossed with a turd make our hearts glow?

The bike takes flight and the Amblin logo is born.

Read more on page 74

**06****ALIEN** 1979

The pitch is efficient in Ridley Scott's space schlock: a critter cuts through a spaceship crew (it's a concept that goes back as far as 1958's *It! The Terror From Beyond Space*). But it's the eerie designs that generate its power, aping *Star Wars'* world-forming principles but adding psychosexual resonance. "Alien's environment was a statement," said Scott: let's make sci-fi real... and scary.

It's hard not to get attached to that facehugger...

Read more on page 32

**05****BACK TO THE FUTURE** 1985

Never mind the gravitational pull: Bob Zemeckis' comedy makes light of time travel's "heavy" paradoxes. Zapped from the '80s to the '50s, Marty McFly (Michael J. Fox) finds his mum fancies him and so plays matchmaker to his parents so he can be conceived. This is a quantum-fired Capra-com mixing innocence and invention. It might just be the perfect blockbuster.

"Your kids are going to love it..." McFly invents rock'n'roll.

Read more on page 48

**04****2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY** 1968

Man walked on the moon in 1969, but Stanley Kubrick couldn't wait that long. *2001* made a giant leap for cinema a year before Neil Armstrong took one small step for mankind. "I was fascinated by the effects," remembers James Cameron. "Because I had no idea how they were done." To infinity and beyond? Using everything from a 30-tonne ferris wheel to close-ups of chemicals, Kubrick's epic pioneered special effects footage that left Nasa gobsmacked. Great apes, the greatest cut in cinema history, space stations dancing to Wagner, HAL's evil eye, the ultimate trip and that cosmic destination... What does it all mean? Arthur C. Clarke: "If you understand *2001* completely, we failed..."

Keir Dullea's kaleidoscopic voyage to another dimension.

Read more on page 20



## 03 STAR WARS: EPISODE V – THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK 1980

"An epic without a dream," said critics' critic Pauline Kael of *Star Wars*. "Impersonal and rather junky," was her verdict on *Return Of The Jedi*. But even she liked *Empire*. "Scenes linger in the mind," she wrote. True enough – but not just the big moments: a rained-on R2-D2 peeping through the window on "tip-toe"; Chewie's wail when the doors close and Luke hasn't come home; Yoda's eyes falling as his student fails. Human touches, grace notes, details: *Empire*'s attention to them keeps its expanding universe concrete. Most credit director Irvin Kershner for the film's slicker surface and deeper emotion, but save some praise for Lucas, who bet the farm on a riskier follow-up. The result? A sequel that took *Star Wars* to a whole new place, and the crowds with it.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** When the bad man tells the good man that he is, in fact, his old man.  
Read more on page 30



## 01 STAR WARS 1977

What reads on paper like a fairytale – hero flies into space to rescue a princess – became an international phenomenon thanks to some exceptional FX, a cast of talented unknowns and the tangible authenticity George Lucas lent to his galaxy far, far away. It's a film that even has completely unique sounds, sounds you'd never heard anywhere else – the lightsabers, the TIE fighters, Darth Vader's breathy tones, and so on. That it still holds up over nearly four decades on is mostly because it's a rattling good yarn that's exciting, funny and unashamedly emotional.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** You can never see that Death Star explode too often.  
Read more on page 28



## 02 BLADE RUNNER 1982

Dreadful on-set atmosphere ("It was like there was a 3ft sheet of glass between us," remembers Rutger Hauer), disastrous test screenings ("Slow", "Draggy", "Gloomy", said the cue cards) and a feeble \$14m at the box office (partly thanks to *E.T.*). For certain, audiences must have been shocked to see wise-cracking flyboy Han Solo suddenly transformed into a moping, boozing killer who shot women in the back and date-raped Sean Young.

But time always tells the truth. It's hard to think of another sci-fi since *Metropolis* whose influence is so keenly felt: *Blade Runner*'s future-noir continues to emerge in life and movies: videophones, retina scanning, human cloning, corruption, endless rain... Reborn without the voiceover or the happy ending, *Blade Runner* now looks every bit the definitive cult sci-fi classic, as Harrison Ford's cop hunts escaped replicants in the LA of 2019.

**OUT OF THIS WORLD** Zhora's slo-mo death, falling through sheets of glass. Tragic and beautiful.  
Read more on page 112

WORDS MATT MUELLER

# GRAVITY

Sandra Bullock and George Clooney get lost in space in a stunning triumph of special effects weighted by a strong human core

## gravity *noun*

1. the force that attracts objects toward one another, especially the force that makes things fall to the ground.
2. seriousness.

If you've wondered what swallowed up Alfonso Cuarón after his last film *Children Of Men*, which came out in 2006, look no further than *Gravity*. A space thriller about two astronauts (Sandra Bullock and George Clooney) on a Shuttle mission who are left stranded 372 miles above Earth after their ship is destroyed, Cuarón's latest took four and a half years to make. When you see it, you'll understand why: it contains the most mesmerising visual effects of astronauts in zero gravity ever concocted for the big screen. No doubt about it, *Gravity* has been a labour of love, one the stubborn Mexican filmmaker refused to give up on despite frequent tear-inducing setbacks – and industry brainiacs like David Fincher advising Cuarón's beleaguered Director of Photography Emmanuel "Chivo" Lubezki to postpone the film for five to seven years until technology caught up with his lofty ambitions.

"In the end, Fincher was nearly right. It did take almost five years," smiles Cuarón when *Total Film* meets with him in LA, right before Comic-Con. David Heyman, who first worked with

Cuarón when he handed him the reins to the third *Harry Potter* ("some thought I was crazy to do that"), never expected an easy shoot but nor did he anticipate *Gravity* taking quite so long to pull off. "Alfonso is a perfectionist who is always pushing the limits of what is possible, and he doesn't give in," says the producer. "If you're pushing for greatness, it doesn't come easy."

*Gravity* started with an idea by Cuarón's son Jonas, who had written a script involving two characters in a perilous environment. "It was *Gravity* but set in the desert," explains Jonas. What impressed his dad was how it delivered an immersive, suspenseful narrative not just through action set-pieces but through vivid character emotion. Together, father and son decided to transpose this minimalist, self-contained concept into space, building a story grounded in present-day reality. "We didn't want it to be a sci-fi," says Jonas, "we wanted it to feel like, the moment before the debris strikes and it all goes wrong, you are in one of those IMAX documentaries about the Hubble telescope."

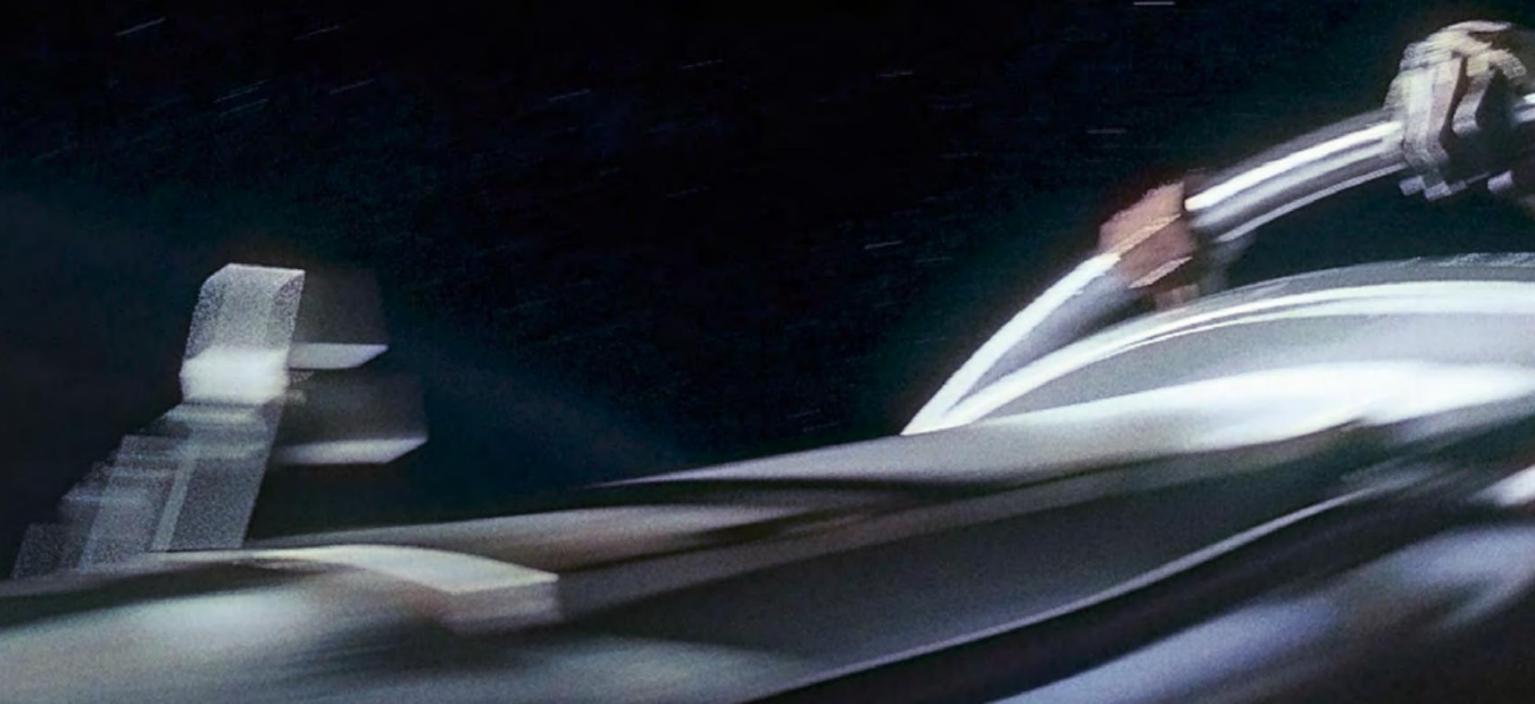
*Gravity*'s two primary characters are Dr. Ryan Stone (Bullock) and Matt Kowalsky (Clooney). The former is a medical engineer who's lost her child and is on her first mission. She's not a terribly good astronaut, it turns out, unlike her veteran cohort. When Stone spins off into space after the shuttle's wiped out, there is a sense of genuine peril. As for

the accidental destruction, it's inspired by an apparently feasible scenario in which two satellites strike and the resulting debris sets off a cataclysmic chain reaction of clashing, disintegrating satellites; it's called the Kessler syndrome. The resulting cascade of bullet-sized debris, travelling at lethal speeds, would make all future space exploration impossible, not to mention bringing an end to satellite-aided communication. No more iPhone.

"The debris in our film is a metaphor for adversities in life," says Cuarón, "but the adversities also create the scenario for possibilities of rebirth." He was determined to keep *Gravity* present-day so audiences would be familiar with the space technology, and to continue the visual language he's deployed in his recent work: long, unbroken takes with as little editing as possible. The two decisions collided to create their own Kessler Syndrome for the production. There's a good reason why most space movies are set in the future: they don't have to deal with the mundane realities of modern-day space travel.

## METICULOUS PROCESS

Determined that the effects of space look true and real, with no sagging of skin, hair or clothing to betray gravity's presence, Cuarón steered the bulk of the film through a meticulously exhaustive process at Soho-based FX house



Framestore under the aegis of visual effects supervisor Tim Webber. "The weirdest thing about this film is that we had to post-produce it before we could even start shooting," says Cuarón. "We had to invent everything." Nothing was ruled out during the gruelling process of trialling practical techniques to attempt to achieve the desired results, from conventional wires to the "vomit comet", a large plane which drops out of the sky to create brief intervals of weightlessness (which Ron Howard used to masterful effect in *Apollo 13*).

Ordinary wires didn't work because the strain was obvious on the actors' faces. As for the vomit comet, Cuarón loved it – he even had a go himself – but it was much too limiting. "The whole thing drops for about 25 seconds and after the first five seconds you're floating, but out of that you can use maybe 15 seconds," says the director, "and our opening shot is 12 minutes long..." So long, vomit comet.

Ultimately, *Gravity*, which made use of soundstages at Shepperton as well as a brief location shoot in Arizona, ended up being

&gt;&gt;





Lost in space: Sandra Bullock and George Clooney drift through Alfonso Cuarón's zero gravity nightmare.

created predominantly inside the Framestore hard drives using a combination of technologies. The most complex involved a 9ft-by-9ft LED cube suspended off the ground. Inside would be Bullock, dressed in a white leotard fitted with motion sensors, surrounded on all sides by LED lights. Screens would show her images of what Dr. Stone was witnessing, while the LED display lit her face depending at what angle she was facing the sun and Earth. Outside the cube was a car assembly robot fitted to a computerised track, specially adapted to carry a camera.

It all sounds terribly complicated. Cuarón attempts to rid *Total Film* of our confusion by leaping up with a marker pen and a nearby desk lamp to demonstrate. "So, this is the sun, OK?..." When we still look confused, he admits, "Even people who were there didn't understand what we were doing. You would walk into that set and it was just an empty stage with a cube of light at the end, a truck with the robot and rows and rows of geeks with computers."

The only real piece of Bullock and Clooney you'll see in *Gravity*'s exterior, touching-the-void sequences are their terrified faces. Anything and everything that you see outside the confines of the shuttle (or the space stations they try to reach once that's been destroyed), down to their spacesuits, helmets and whatever they happen to be doing, was created inside a computer. On her light-cube days, Bullock would spend hours in isolation, with Cuarón feeding her music to reflect different moods. "She would just stay in her state; she used it as a tool," says Cuarón, "and whenever she was not there, she was working out, because some of the rigs were gruesome. She needed a lot of strength for those things, and she needed to make it appear effortless."

For scenes of Dr. Stone floating inside a spacecraft, the actress wore a super-thin carbon-fibre mould that fit snugly to her torso under her costume. "We did a system of wiring that had never been done before. Because of the



'It was just an empty stage with a cube of light, a truck with a robot and rows of geeks' **ALFONSO CUARÓN**

amount of wires on different axes [*they were*] also computerised so they were in sync with the lighting and with Sandra moving around," says Cuarón. "Sometimes she would be held by the puppeteers from *War Horse*. The rig would come toward them, they would catch her and continue the Zero G floatiness. Everything we did had two things in common: it was all pre-programmed; and it was very painful for Sandra. Everything was a torture chamber for her."

Clooney had it slightly easier. His jokey astro buzzes around the shuttle like a big kid with a new toy. To create said effect, the actor would sit on a teeter-totter chair and float around space, held up by the puppeteers, with Bullock sometimes suspended by wires nearby to allow for interaction. The length of time it took to get *Gravity* airborne saw other stars come and go. Early on, Angelina Jolie was set to play Dr. Stone and Robert Downey Jr. was briefly attached to Kowalsky. Jolie moved on, while Cuarón admits that Downey Jr.'s improvisatory genius was an unworkable fit for *Gravity*. "We had this whole pre-determined system, like, 'You have seven seconds to say that line,'

says Cuarón. "That was not going to work with Robert."

Ultimately, Bullock and Clooney stepped into the breach, and after years of anticipatory buzz, *Gravity* has turned out to be the coolest space film in years, a terrifying thrill-ride packed with whizz-bang set-pieces, astonishing bravura camera moves, hi-tech visual effects to blow the mind and a superb performance from Bullock. Thanks to Cuarón's relentless driving, *Gravity* is as beautiful as it is harrowing. "It's an artful movie," says Heyman. "It's also a genre movie in the vein of *Duel*, but carrying those ideas that resonate through *Y Tu Mamá También* and *Children Of Men* about embracing the life that is before you."

While Bullock is *Gravity*'s self-doubting but ultimately resolute heroine, it was always about much more than heroism for her. "I love stories where people are unafraid to show that they're broken or don't know the answer or are struggling with something, and in a very human way figure out a way to overcome it," she declares. "We'll never be superheroes, but we can do pretty spectacular things."

WE LOVE SCI-FI!

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF TIMELESS SF

# CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND

Recalling the magic of  
**STEVEN SPIELBERG**'s  
flying saucer opus



**STEVE JARRATT,**  
FORMER GROUP SENIOR  
EDITOR AT FUTURE  
PUBLISHING AND  
EDITOR OF 3D WORLD

Steven Spielberg's fable of mankind's first contact with extra-terrestrials struck a real chord with the teenage version of me back in 1977. I remember seeing it on a cold winter evening at an old-fashioned cinema with a single massive screen. For a kid obsessed with sci-fi, movie special effects and the space program, this was all my wildest imaginings brought vividly to life.

The thing that really grabbed me was its sheer grandeur. From the vast night skies with a single moving pin prick of light to the final climax over Devil's Tower in Wyoming. And it's a movie with a cast and crew firing on all cylinders: John Williams's emotive score; Douglas Trumbull's impeccable effects work; Richard Dreyfuss' man on the brink of a breakdown... All brought together with Spielberg's innate sense of timing and vision, with just enough UFO conspiracy mythology to make you think he knows more than he's letting on.

*Close Encounters Of The Third Kind* is also notable for being a mainstream movie in which the aliens aren't Cold-War throwbacks wanting to destroy the human race for no good reason. Instead these ETs are only here for one thing: to make new friends. They might do it in an unorthodox style, using a mixture of kidnapping and ominous disco, but that's what makes it so... alien. They haven't mastered gruff American accents by watching TV and their motives are oddly (and fittingly) non-human. There's a disconcerting sense of uneasiness about events right until the last reel of the film, but it's a tone which feels absolutely bang on.

The final departure of the mothership is a sequence I'll never forget. Watching Roy Neary on his way to another planet, accompanied by William's soaring soundtrack, was a magical moment – made even more special when we left the cinema to be met by a frosty night sky bristling with stars.



As the Sat Nav would  
say, you have reached  
your destination.

## FACT ATTACK!

- The two characters played by Francois Truffaut and Bob Balaban are based on real UFOlogists, one of whom, Dr. J. Allen Hynek, appears in the film.
- Spielberg's inspiration for the design of the mothership was a view across the city lights of the San Fernando Valley and an Indian refinery covered in lights.
- The collection of US Navy planes found in the Mexican desert, labelled Flight 19, is based on a real incident where five TBM Avenger torpedo bombers took off from Fort Lauderdale in December 1945 and were never seen again.
- The co-ordinates read out for the alien landing are about 275 miles south of the Devil's Tower.

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FORTHCOMING

# SOLARIS



WORDS LUKE DORMEHL

# Solaris

The “Russian answer to 2001” was a great film in its own right, and was also extremely influential

In the late 1960s and early '70s, science fiction became, for a brief moment, fashionable among the world's most elite directors. Over at Pinewood Studios one of the stages was taken over as New Wave auteur François Truffaut moved in to shoot a version of Ray Bradbury's dystopian novel *Fahrenheit 451*. Stanley Kubrick – hot off the success of 1964's *Dr. Strangelove* – asked for, and received, \$10.5 million to turn Arthur C. Clarke short story “The Sentinel” into a sci-fi epic. And in the Soviet Union, Andrei Tarkovsky began work on *Solaris*, the third film of his acclaimed career. While *Solaris* is today regarded as one of sci-fi's greatest films, Tarkovsky often claimed to have no great affection for the genre. “I don't like science fiction,” he said. “All those games with technology, various futurological tricks and inventions, which are always somehow artificial. But I'm interested in problems I can extract from fantasy. Man and his problems, his world, his

anxieties... My *Solaris* is not, after all, true science fiction. Neither is its literary predecessor. What counts here is man, his personality, his very persistent bonds with planet Earth, responsibility for the times he lives in. I don't like your typical science fiction, I don't understand it, I don't believe in it.”

When Tarkovsky began work on the film in the autumn of 1968, however, he came to the project for reasons which went beyond his knee-jerk genre preferences. Simply put, he needed a job, and to get it he required a bankable genre to work in. Tarkovsky's previous picture, *Andrei Rublev*, about the life of the 15th Century icon painter, had not been released on account of problems with Soviet authorities. (Various enforced edits of the film would keep it in post production until 1971.) In addition, his screenplay, *A White, White Day* – which would form the basis of his next film *The Mirror* – had been turned down for funding. Despite his

misgivings, he settled on science fiction as a seemingly safe genre to focus on while the controversy of *Andrei Rublev* dissipated, and chose a popular novel to adapt. This was, after all, to be his blockbuster.

The novel of *Solaris* was first published in 1961, written by popular Polish author Stanislaw Lem. Its protagonist, Dr. Kris Kelvin, travels from Earth to a space station studying the planet Solaris. Solaris is a living ocean, presumed to be a singular, sentient organism, although no contact has yet successfully been made by humans. Upon arrival at Solaris Station, Kelvin finds one of the three scientists who work there dead, and the other two acting strangely. There are reports of unexplained sightings, which Kelvin writes off as hallucinations – until his long-dead lover (who committed suicide years earlier) appears before him. The manifestations are being created by Solaris itself, whose mind differs so greatly from human intelligence that >>



## CLOONEY IN SPACE



In 2002, *Solaris* got the Hollywood treatment when Steven Soderbergh created his own adaptation of Stanislaw Lem's novel, with George Clooney in the role of Dr. Kris (now Chris) Kelvin. It's actually pretty good too – even if it does lose about what you'd expect by being more than an hour shorter than Tarkovsky's version. Nor was that the only other screen version of the story. In fact, the earliest (*Solyaris*) came out in 1968; being a made-for-TV movie directed by Boris Nirenburg for the Soviet Union's Central Television network. Tarkovsky himself returned to the science fiction genre in 1979 with the excellent *Stalker*.

# SOLARIS



Donatas Banionis played the tortured Kris Kelvin.

## ON THE COUCH

If ever a sci-fi film cried out for a bit of psychoanalysis, it's this one. In *The Pervert's Guide To Cinema* (2006), Slovenian philosopher and critical theorist Slavoj Žižek lays out his own interpretation of *Solaris*: "What we get here is the lowest male mythology; this idea that woman doesn't exist on her own. That a woman is merely a man's dream realised or even, as radical anti-feminists claim, the man's guilt realised... If man cleanses his desire, gets rid of dirty material, fantasies, woman ceases to exist. At the end of the film, we get a kind of a Holy Communion, a reconciliation of [Kelvin] not with his wife, but with his father."



This pose may deceive: *Solaris* is anything but a "girl in trouble" movie.

communication is impossible. "We take off into the cosmos, ready for anything: for solitude, for hardship, for exhaustion, death," Lem writes. "And yet, if we examine it more closely, our enthusiasm turns out to be a sham... We have no need of other worlds. We need mirrors. We don't know what to do with other worlds." *Solaris* is thus, effectively, a ghost story – as Kelvin is haunted by the memory of his former lover, Harey (spelled "Hari" in the film), which Solaris has turned into a flesh-and-blood construction.

### TARKOVSKY VS SCIENCE FICTION

"When I read Lem's novel, what struck me above all were the moral problems evident in the relationship between Kelvin and his conscience, as manifested in the form of Hari," Tarkovsky recalled. "In fact if I understood, and greatly admired, the second half of the novel – the technology, the atmosphere of the space station,

the scientific questions – it was entirely because of that situation, which seems to me to be fundamental to the work."

Tarkovsky spent 1969 working with novelist and screenwriter Fridrikh Gorenshtein, hammering out a script for the film. As he had previously done with Vladimir Bogomolov, the writer of the short story upon which Tarkovsky's first feature film was based, the director fell out with *Solaris* author Stanisław Lem over his chosen direction for the adaptation. Their disagreement was a fundamental one: where Lem was concerned with science's inability to comprehend extra-terrestrial life, Tarkovsky was more interested in exploring the human condition, through the feelings Kelvin has for Hari; giving the film a greater psychological component. Nothing illustrated this better than the first draft of the script, which saw three-quarters of the proposed film taking place on

# 'THE DIRECTOR FELL OUT WITH THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR OVER THE FILM'



Earth. Lem was appalled, and disputed the decision. He was supported by the funding Mosfilm committee, who made Tarsovsky undergo rewrites to ensure the script closer resembled the original novel. Even so, the final shooting script for *Solaris*, and the finished film, reflects Tarsovsky's sensibilities to a far greater extent than it does Lem's. For Lem, the relationship between Kelvin and his wife demonstrates the futility of abstract concepts like love and forgiveness in a universe which appears oblivious to such things. Tarsovsky saw these same ideas as central to our existence. "Between the author and the director there must be a spiritual harmony, a similar approach to film and literature," Lem later told one interviewer, of his dislike of Tarsovsky's interpretation. "Life is too short," he sighed.

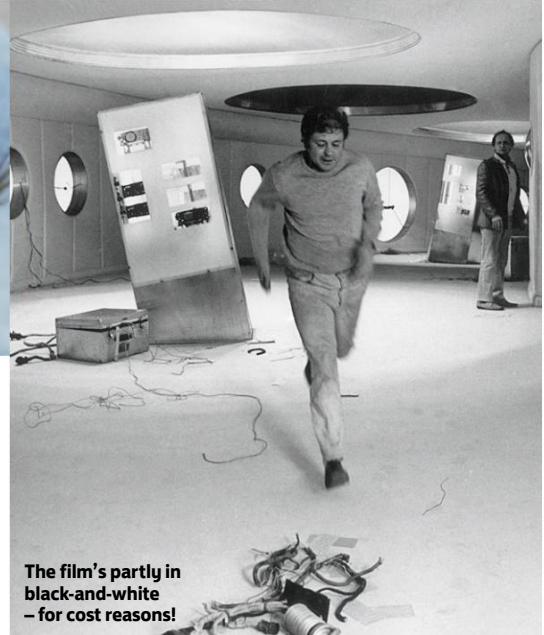
Filming on *Solaris* began in March 1971 and continued through the summer. The film

IMAGES: BFI (3), THE KOBAL COLLECTION (1)



interiors were shot at the Mosfilm studios in Moscow, while the exteriors were shot at nearby Zvenigorod (with the exception of the scene in which a character drives through a futuristic cityscape, which was filmed in Tokyo). For the part of Kelvin, the director selected 46-year-old Donatas Banionis, whose previous screen role had been in Grigori Kozintsev's adaptation of *King Lear* (in which his voice was dubbed by another actor, Aleksandr Demyanenko). For the role of Hari, he chose Natalya Bondarchuk, the 20-year-old daughter of Sergei Bondarchuk, one of the most important directors in the history of Russian film. In a sense, Tarsovsky's approach to actors and acting was not altogether outwardly different from that of Alfred Hitchcock, whose answer to the question "What's my motivation?" was invariably "Your salary." Likewise, Tarsovsky did not think in causalities, but rather in images. He thought of actors as no more or less important than any other part of the scene he was filming: an idea which sounds insulting, until one considers the startling beauty of just about any scene in a Tarsovsky film.

Fresh off his argument with Stanisław Lem over *Solaris*' tone, Tarsovsky next feuded with his long-time cinematographer, Vadim Yusov, over which lens the film should be shot with. "I was really tired because of certain tension," Yusov would later say about the experience of shooting *Solaris*, which proved to be their last collaboration. "Working together on one film for a very long time is particularly detrimental to mutual relationships. One ought to understand what the director wants. But when I totally agree with him, if I agree with his demands I gradually become his slave. It's a psychological problem." The arguments primarily came down to one bone of contention: Tarsovsky wanted to shoot the film with a longer lens, with the effect of emphasising the characters over the sci-fi backdrops, while Yusov wished to better show off the space station sets. It was Tarsovsky's humanism versus the desire to make a sci-fi film all over again. (In Yusov's favour was the fact that no less a film authority than Japanese director Akira Kurosawa had visited the set and complimented the realism of the space station design.) The arguments weren't helped by the fact that the production ran out of film stock on several occasions, necessitating several scenes being filmed in black-and-white. "Work on *Solaris* has been hell," Tarsovsky wrote in his diary on one particularly traumatic occasion. "We're behind schedule [and] Yusov and I are constantly arguing."



The first cut of *Solaris* was shown at Mosfilm on 30 December 1971. After some partial re-editing it was released in the Soviet Union on 20 March 1972, and screened at the Cannes festival on 13 May. While it didn't quite receive the attention afforded Tarsovsky's previous two films, it still walked away with the Special Jury Prize.

## CLASH OF THE SCI-FI EPICS

The suggestion most often made, both by audiences today and critics at the time of its release, is that *Solaris* represents the Soviet "reply" to Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). Certainly, in one sense this is accurate. Tarsovsky saw *2001* early on in the development of *Solaris*, disliked it immensely, and subsequently set about making his own science fiction epic; albeit on one-tenth of the budget. Both films involve a small number of people marooned impossible distances from home, encountering a plethora of otherworldly sights and sounds. Both, in the words of Roger Ebert, take place in fully realised worlds that appear "more like environments than entertainments". Both easily crash past the two-hour mark, with long, ponderous sequences of near-silence (according to cinema lore, a four-minute driving scene in *Solaris* was put in with Tarsovsky's express hope that "this will drive the idiots out of the cinema"). While *2001* would go on to influence filmmakers like George Lucas and James Cameron, however, *Solaris* would also leave its stylistic mark on the genre: its cluttered vision of the future, filled with debris – standing in stark contrast to the shininess of Kubrick's *2001* vision of the future, which Tarsovsky dismissed as "cold and soulless" – would become the "used future" look of later films like *Alien* and *Blade Runner*.

For all their similarities, however, *Solaris* and *2001* stand apart in one fundamental way: while Kubrick's picture turns a camera outward to explore the pristine wonders of the universe, Tarsovsky turns his own lens back towards Earth, onto humanity, and into memory.

# ANATOMY OF A CLASSIC

► RELEASED: 6 April 1968 ► RUNTIME: 149 minutes  
► CERTIFICATE: U ► DIRECTOR: Stanley Kubrick  
► WRITERS: Arthur C. Clarke, Stanley Kubrick (based on Clarke's story "The Sentinel") ► STUDIO: Warner Bros

## CLASSIC DIALOGUE

HAL 9000: "I'm afraid. I'm afraid, Dave. Dave, my mind is going. I can feel it. I can feel it. My mind is going. There is no question about it. I can feel it. I can feel it. I can feel it. I'm afraid..."

WORDS JAYNE NELSON

# 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY

Let's go ape for a big space baby...

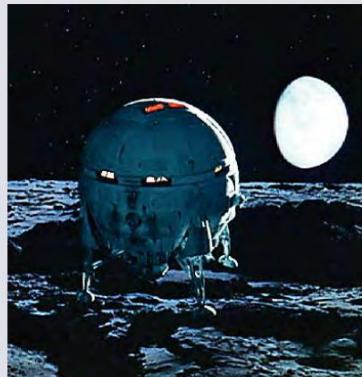


### FLYING HIGH

A quick peruse of the shuttle seen in the first "modern" scenes of the movie show just how ahead of his time Clarke could be (he did famously predict the geostationary satellite). Not only does the ship bear a more-than-passing resemblance to our modern-day Space Shuttle, the seats also have screens built into them not too dissimilar from the ones you find on modern aircraft. Shame the shuttle is

a Pan-American Airways one, though, considering the firm collapsed in 1991. Still, even Clarke couldn't know everything.

### A "GOOD SCIENCE FICTION MOVIE"



Clarke wrote in *The Lost Worlds Of 2001* that "when Stanley Kubrick wrote to me in the spring of 1964, saying that he wanted to make the 'proverbial good science fiction movie', the lunar landing still seemed, psychologically, a dream of the far future." Man would take that one giant step only 15 months after the release of *2001*. Previous to that, going to the grey orb in the sky had been the stuff of science fantasy literature, including H.G. Wells's *The First Men In The Moon* (which had been made into a film in 1964). According to Clarke, NASA were spending the entire budget of *2001* (over \$10,000,000) every day.

### THE ANTI-STAR WARS



Before *2001* there were barely any "serious" SF movies to thrill the critics or serious-minded viewers. But *2001* set a precedent for years to come, spawning imitators galore (everything from *Silent Running* to *THX 1138* to *The Man Who Fell To Earth*). However, all that ended with a bang in 1977 with the release of the unashamedly pulpy *Star Wars* – suddenly there was noise in space, and as much as we love the scientific accuracy of *2001*, you just can't beat a TIE fighter in full roar.

### IN SPACE, NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU...

Clarke was a stickler for scientific accuracy, which is why so much of *2001* reflects real-life science: the fact that the spaceships rotate to create artificial gravity, for instance, or the (still-audacious) omission of any sound effects while action takes place in the vacuum of space. At first, though, he and Kubrick were worried that such ideas would have to be explained to an audience who might find such concepts confusing. And that was without all the other things that could baffle them – computers, anthropology, religion... To help ease viewers into the film, interviews were filmed with experts on such matters and were to have been inserted into the film as a prelude. They were eventually dropped.



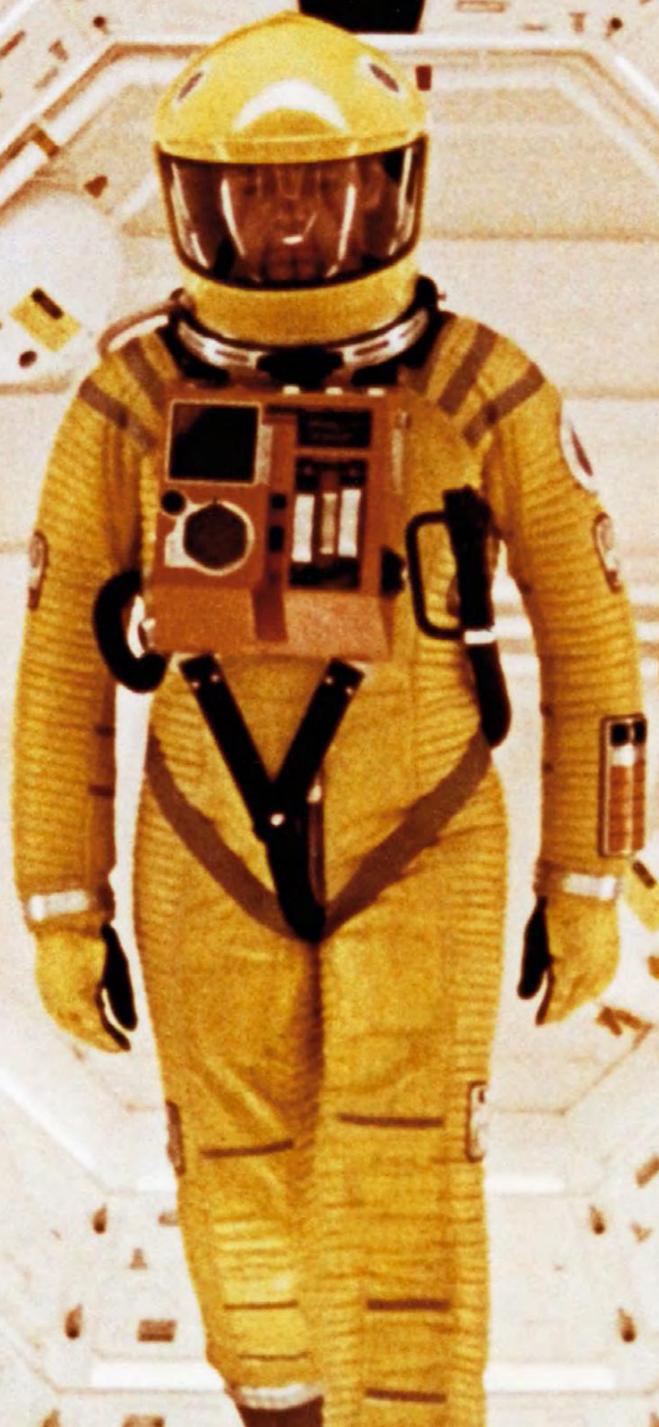
## COLD KUBRICK

"It's no coincidence that many people see HAL 9000, a computer, as the most "human" of all the cast in *2001* – Kubrick made a career out of de-humanising his lead characters. Certainly there's nothing warm or likeable about Jack Torrance in *The Shining* or the isolated couple played by Cruise and Kidman in *Eyes Wide Shut*; even the lively cast of *A Clockwork Orange* aren't empathetic (thankfully). The humans in *2001* are cyphers; they act robotically, show no emotion and seem to move through their lives by rote. HAL, meanwhile, shows jealousy, paranoia and fear.



## OUR BRAINS HURT!

So what the hell is *2001* about, anyway? The ending is open to interpretation, but the basic story is this: mankind is evolving, and each landmark moment in their evolution is being watched by a mysterious alien force. (You could argue that this force is actually *influencing* events, but that's your call; who knows?) First there's the monolith that observes apes figuring out how to use tools; then there's the device discovered on the moon, which sends a signal out into deep space for its makers (possibly along the lines of: "Humans have found me, which means they've stopped flinging bones about and have conquered space! Come see!"). And then, just as humanity – in the form of Dave Bowman – is "conquered" by a computer, along come the aliens again to, uh, watch him transform into a new life form. We don't know why it's a space baby either, but just go with it.



## CLASSIC SCENE: BONE OF INVENTION



1 An ape discovers that he can get rid of his rival by clobbering him to death with a thigh bone. Ouch.



2 Thrilled with his new-found power, the ape throws the bone into the air in victory. It swirls and spins...



3 ...And becomes a spaceship above the Earth! It's the most stunning jump-cut in cinema history, moving from the Pleistocene era into the 21st Century in the blink of an eye.

## THAT SINKING FEELING

### 2001: A Space Odyssey



dir. STANLEY KUBRICK 1968 MIRAMCO/UA/PTI

When work began on *2001: A Space Odyssey*, man had yet to set foot on the surface of the moon. Clearly such a momentous event was foremost in Arthur C. Clarke's mind, however, because in 1961 he wrote *A Fall of Moondust*, a thriller

which posited that the dusty lunar surface could swallow up any vehicle that landed on it. It was a fascinating idea which, luckily, was proved untrue when Neil Armstrong didn't disappear into lunar quicksands on 20 July 1969.

WORDS JAMES WHITE

# STAR TREK

On the eve of Star Trek's triumphant return to the big screen in 2009, we spoke to its stars about taking on the iconic roles...

## "I WAS MORE OF A STAR WARS KID!"



**Chris Pine**  
*James T Kirk*

Captain Kirk himself chats *Star Wars*, studying and reaching out to The Shat...

### How familiar were you with the original series?

I was born in 1980 so I was more of a *Star Wars* kid and I'm not really a science fiction buff. I like *The Abyss* and I do like *Star Wars*, but I'm not an avid sci-fi fan.

### Did J.J. make you research the show?

I got the encyclopaedia and the box sets of the TV show. I tried to do my due diligence and started watching the original series slavishly, but then, and this was a personal choice for me, I felt it wasn't helping me to do my job. And I would love to sit here and tell you that I know everything about it and whatever... but I just can't. It just didn't help me. What helped me was reading my script and trying to do the best job I could to breathe life into the character on the pages that I got.

### Zachary got to work with Leonard Nimoy. Did you ask William Shatner for advice?

No, I never got a chance to meet Mr. Shatner. I wrote him a letter when I first got the part and introduced myself and essentially said that I wasn't trying to usurp his status as the original Kirk. I was just an actor and happened to get the part that was James Kirk. He was very kind and responded promptly and said, "Thank you so much and I wish you all the best of luck."

### How did you decide to tackle Kirk?

What was presented to me was this vision of Kirk in the script as an angry young kid who is dealing with some heavy family shit and is angry at the world. He's a rebel without a cause. I think everyone can remember what it's like to be 15 and he's a 25-year-old 15-year-old! And he has to mould all that energy and that drive and all that obstinacy and the spectrum of emotions into the man that Kirk then becomes, which is the captain of the ship.

## "I DON'T HAVE GEORGE TAKEI'S VOCAL CORDS!"



**John Cho**  
*Sulu*

The new Sulu on fighting, pleasing fans and not going "Full Takei" ...

### How was fight training?

I loved the training because it gave me the mechanics to engage in the fight scenes. And it was me, Zach and Chris, and I sort of feel like we went through Starfleet Academy together because we were training so hard and for so long that we became bonded.

### Anton Yelchin is using his take on Walter Koenig's Chekov voice. Did you ever feel tempted to do the full George Takei?

I did not. It's probably more due to George Takei than Sulu, but George is such an iconic personality. I just felt it best not to imitate him. Plus, I do not have the vocal cords. They do not do that voice, that sound. It's unique!

### Did you get schooled on using the controls properly? You know fans will be watching that...

I remember J.J. and I, and Anton, had a conversation about "how do we manage this?" And hopefully it looks real! I'm sure people will be on at me anyway...

# 'I WROTE MR. SHATNER A LETTER WHEN I GOT THE PART AND SAID I WASN'T TRYING TO USURP HIS STATUS AS KIRK'

CHRIS PINE

## "LEONARD'S AN INCREDIBLE MAN..."



**Zachary Quinto  
Spock**

We open up Spock's brain to get the lowdown on casting, typecasting and cancelled fights...

## "J.J. LOVES SURPRISING PEOPLE!"



**Zoe Saldana  
Uhura**

Hailing frequencies open as Zoe discusses Nichelle Nichols and staying mum...

### Did you talk to Nichelle Nichols about the character?

I met her – I met her twice and she came to visit the set. Everything about her is Uhura. So it was very good to study her as a person, but not to study her version of Uhura, which is a very different thing.

### So what is your take on the character of Uhura?

These characters were never fully developed, so I got the essential things about her. There's a lot of demand she has on herself. She's an overachiever and takes herself a little too seriously.

### You worked on *Avatar* and now *Star Trek* with directors who like to keep things secret. Is it tough staying quiet and not revealing plot details?

It's been so hard, because I'm ADD and I will spill everything – "I do this and this and... Oh my god!" J.J. loves surprising people. He's very childlike and would have my neck if I gave out anything!

### So this was a part that you pretty much pushed for...

I did, yeah. I was doing a lot of publicity for *Heroes* at the time that I found out they were making the movie, and in one of my first interviews with my hometown newspaper the journalist asks me if there were any roles I was interested in playing beyond Sylar, and I said, "Well, funny you should say that. I just found out they're making a movie of *Star Trek* and I would love to play Spock." And I was the first person they saw for the role, so it fell together remarkably well.

### And you got to interact with Leonard Nimoy?

Leonard and I have become good friends through this process and I value his presence in my life as a friend tremendously. I think he's an incredible man. I have a tremendous respect and affinity for him, and I often feel that if I could have lived half the life that he's lived when I'm his age, I would be very content.

### Are you concerned about the typecasting that could come with the role?

Well, I don't have the same worry. We live in a very different time and there's not the same stigma attached to science fiction now as there was in 1967. I don't think I'll deal with the same adversity as he did as an actor. Also because it's my goal not to. I intend to work hard to make sure that doesn't happen.

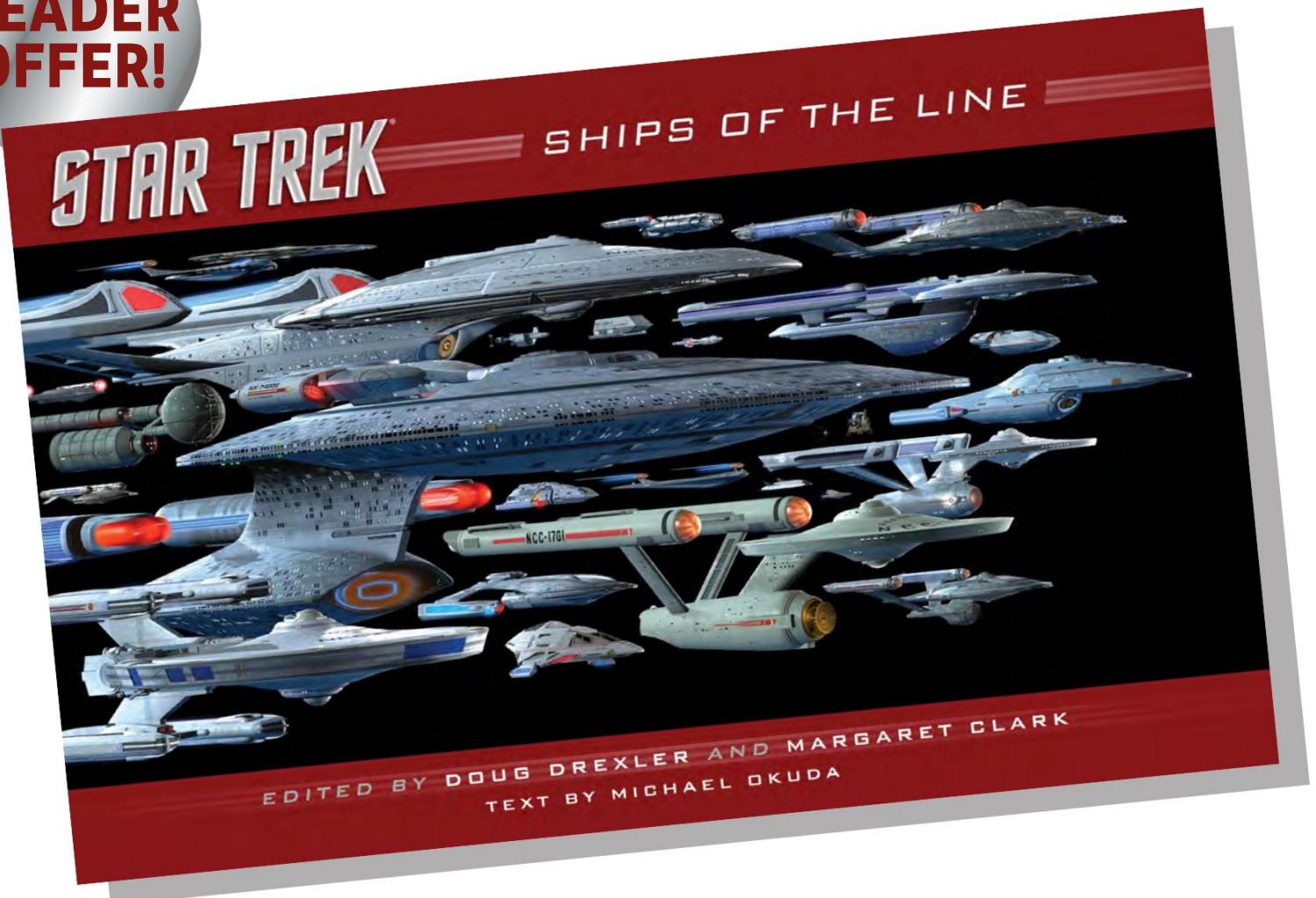
### We hear you went to fight training. So is Spock a warrior in this movie?

There was originally a sequence that was, I think, Spock against six people hand-to-hand. And so I spent a lot of time learning this particular form of martial arts and then literally two days before we were shooting it, J.J. said, "Yeah, we're not going to do that. It's going to be a gunfight." And I was, like, "OK..."

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# AVATAR

James Cameron's blockbuster was one of a rare few films that manage to tell a rollicking tale using real science...

WORDS MICHAEL MARSHALL

**F**orget the predictable story. *Avatar* is a fantastic portrayal of a complex ecosystem, with animals and plants living together in a believable way.

The movie is set on a moon called Pandora, mostly in a region of dense rainforest. There are many animals, each with a different role. The cat-like thanatators are the top predators, while the hammerhead titanotheres are the big plant-eaters, living in herds like wildebeest.

There are also smaller creatures, not to mention the lush plant-life, including the

coil-shaped helicoradian that folds up and shrinks below ground when Jake touches it. Seems odd, but the leaves of *Mimosa pudica* droop if you touch them.

The organisms were all created by the film's designers, but plant biologist Jodie Holt of the University of California Riverside was hired to help make them believable. Holt says the resulting ecosystem is "very plausible".

But beyond that, the entire film is an ecology lesson. All life on Pandora belongs to the goddess Eywa, who protects the ecosystem.

Eywa is an exaggerated version of James Lovelock's Gaia theory, the notion that life on Earth works to stabilise its environment. According to Lovelock, the Earth is a single organism, called Gaia, that regulates itself.

Gaia theory has taken a lot of flak, and the latest evidence suggests it's wrong: the ecosystem is not that good at preserving itself. But even so, Gaia pointed towards a deeper truth: all life is woven together, and humans cannot survive without the ecosystem to support us. Whatever its faults, *Avatar* conveyed this.

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WORDS ROSIE FLETCHER

# MOON

The man who used to be Zowie Bowie also made one of the most brave and beautiful films of 2009...



**A** love letter to '70s and '80s sci-fi, *Moon* was written especially for Sam Rockwell after he and director Duncan Jones met to discuss another project and discovered their mutual love of space classics. "We talked about a lot of different sci-fi movies that we liked: *Blade Runner*, *Outland*, *2001*, *Alien*," Rockwell recalls when we catch up with the director at Sony Pictures' swanky London HQ. "There was a lot of stuff that we had in common. Then he wrote this sci-fi movie and the character's name was Sam and he sent it to me, so I jumped on board."

Jones set himself some stringent conditions while writing the *Moon* script. He needed to keep the budget small – so made it the story of one man in one room, living alone on the dark side of the moon – but the leading role expansive enough to make it worth Rockwell's while. How'd he do it? He embraced (spoiler alert!) that old sci-fi staple – cloning – and created multiple roles for the actor. That's right, there's more than one Mr. Rockwell on *Moon's* moon...

"We wanted a film that was about people," Jones explains. "I think that's the difference between science fiction now and science fiction of the '70s and '80s. Even the new *Star Trek*, which I loved, is more a spectacle event and only goes into

the people as much as, 'Do you remember, this is what Kirk used to be like?' It doesn't go that deeply into their characters."

With *Moon*, the challenge was to go very deeply into different versions of the same character. "There were a couple of issues I wanted to talk about," Jones reflects. "The idea of meeting yourself and the idea of being able to give your younger self a bit of a slap... I think everyone goes through that."

As it goes, Duncan Jones' younger self was known as Zowie Bowie. The son of David Bowie and his first wife Angela, he dropped the psychedelic moniker for "Joe Jones" as a young teen and at 18 became Duncan Jones. Yes, he does look a bit like his dad. No, he doesn't sound anything like him (at least not to speak to – the singing voice we can't vouch for). A childhood spent in Germany, London and Switzerland, and an education at a Scottish boarding school, led to a PhD in philosophy before he eventually took a place at the London Film School to study directing. So what would grown-up Jones have said to his junior self? "I just wish I'd given myself a break. I wish I'd been less hard on myself."

Out of film school, Jones made his name directing slick commercials, including the 2006 French Connection "fashion vs style" campaign.

Lost in space: (from left to right) Rockwell and Jones "shooting the shit"; Rockwell with GERTY; an older version of Rockwell's character Sam Bell.



**'ANYONE WHO'S SEEN THE FILM KNOWS THAT IT'S SOMETHING ORIGINAL'**  
**- DUNCAN JONES**

With his geek-streak for all things sci-fi, *Moon* feels like a natural first feature for the 38-year-old. But with a budget of just \$5m, it still reeks of ambition. The intense 33-day shoot, which took place at Shepperton Studios on the same soundstage where Ridley Scott shot *Alien* 30 years earlier, was, Jones confesses, a logistical nightmare. Keen to pay homage to Douglas Trumbull, Ron Cobb and Syd Mead, Jones and his creative team used old-school techniques like model miniatures and retro production design, with CG effects layered on top.

But far from being a rip-off or pastiche, *Moon* is something fresh that doffs its space helmet respectfully to its ancestors. "Anyone who's seen it knows," asserts Jones, "that it's something original."

#### DOUBLING UP

Technically, too, *Moon* shoots for the stars. To allow multiple characters played by the same actor to interact seamlessly, Jones used all the tricks in the book, including a body double and split-screen. "But then we wanted to push it one step further," he says. "You have actually got some shots where there's physical interaction and that's when it gets really cool. We were doing this effect in a way that no one had done it before and on an indie budget! That's something to be proud of."

The effect in question involved Rockwell, a tennis ball on a stand and a disembodied limb that had to be added in separately. "That was the only scene where we tried to shoot it and had to leave it and come back to it," remembers Jones. "For Sam it was a nightmare. It was very unnatural for him and it was very complicated technically for me. That was really nerve-wracking because we couldn't afford for it not to work."

Already a hero of the indie circuit thanks to films like *Lawn Dogs* and *Choke*, it's not surprising to see Rockwell reaching for the *Moon*. What appealed to him most about the story? "We talked about what it would be like to meet yourself and would you like yourself if you did? That was an interesting theme to explore. Also, the loneliness of being isolated like that. That was the story we were interested in telling."

We wonder if all the isolation took its toll on Rockwell. "What was kind of lonely was not having other actors on board, because usually, even when there's a lot of crew around on a film set, you tend to hang out with the other actors. Not having another actor was kind of a lonely experience."

So, why is *Moon* – and by extension Jones – so preoccupied with loneliness and isolation? "I've been isolated. I've done this," reveals the actor

grinning shyly. "I lived for three years in Nashville, Tennessee. I was at graduate school and, ever the hopeless romantic, I followed a girl from college that I was going out with and we broke up pretty soon after I got there. I was stuck there, miserable as hell. I felt very, very isolated. And that was part of the resources I needed to write the story."

Wearing all its influences on its sleeve (including Sam's HAL-alike robot companion GERTY, voiced by Kevin Spacey), *Moon*'s maker loves the idea of "fellow sci-fi nerds outdoing each other trying to catch all the little homages to sci-fi films of the past." But he also wants his film to tap into their emotions. Because, behind Rockwell's bravura performance, behind the technical excellence and the philosophical musings, beats a big, swollen, moon-sized heart.

"I always had this idea that the closer you are to someone, or a place, or a people, the more you actually care about them," says Jones. "If someone in London gets shot, I'm like, 'Ooh, that's terrible' and if someone on my street gets shot it's like, 'Bloody hell!' and if someone I know gets shot then it really affects me. And yet if it's someone in Ukraine it's like... [shrugs]"

Or someone on the moon? "Or someone on the moon. Exactly."

# STAR WARS

We delve into the archives to uncover the truth about the release of *Star Wars* in 1977

WORDS M.J. SIMPSON



## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

"Magnificent!" "Brilliant!" "Instantly forgettable!" Or so the critics thought back in 1977 when the world went *Star Wars* potty...

The first ever reviews of *Star Wars* were in two daily Hollywood trade mags dated 20 May 1977. "Magnificent... Lucas combines excellent comedy and drama and progresses it with exciting action in tremendously effective space battles," gushed *The Hollywood Reporter*, while *Variety* deemed it, "The kind of film in which an audience, first entertained, can later walk out feeling good all over."

When the movie actually opened, *The Washington Post* called it "The kind of sci-fi adventure movie you dream about finding, for your own pleasure as well as your kids' pleasure," while *The New York Times* lauded it, "The most elaborate, most expensive, most beautiful movie serial ever made."

*Time* called it "The year's best movie"; *Analog* thought it was "A galactic *Gone With The Wind*"; *Box Office* magazine said, "Few fantasies have been made with such a sense of humour"; and *Films In Review* commented, "It offers an amusing blend of past and present." *Screen International* admitted: "The story is so-so, with written-down dialogue which emphasises the strip cartoon nature of the

characters and situations. But it is this very simplicity which is the secret ingredient in the successful formula." *Film Review* summed up the whole phenomenon with: "There has never been a film like *Star Wars*."

Of course, a knee-jerk reaction was to be expected from some quarters. *The Listener* pondered: "What is there about it that has created this hysteria? It can only be its marriage of sci-fi knowingness with something it is hard to resist calling religious nostalgia." A typically clinical review in the *Monthly Film Bulletin* said, "It could scarcely be termed science fiction at all, but... a simple space adventure, now overlaid with sterile nostalgia and multi-levelled movie puns."

*Time Out* employed no less a person than J.G. Ballard to review the film: "It is engaging, brilliantly designed, acted with real charm, full of verve and visual ingenuity," he wrote.

"It's also totally unoriginal... instantly forgettable and an acoustic nightmare."

*Film Comment* offered two opposing reviews. On the one hand, *Star Wars* was: "An anti-modern message in an ultra-modern wrapper." On the other: "The survival chances of *Star Wars* are slim... Lucas has... made a movie which is totally inept."

"I cannot see what all the fuss is about regarding *Star Wars*," said a hilarious letter in the May 1978 *Film Review*. "There were better space stories over 40 years ago in such publications as *Boys' Magazine*." The following month, the nation's dullest 14-year-old wrote in to the same magazine to say: "I just don't know how adults can watch *Star Wars*. I thought it was a very boring film."

But first prize for missing the point must go to *Take One* magazine, which found "No sense of wonder or magic in the film."

## STAR WARS INVADES THE UK

1977 was an auspicious year for SF. As *Star Wars* bloomed, so did *Blake's 7*, Leela from *Doctor Who* and *Come Back Mrs Noah*...

The first place outside the United States to see *Star Wars*, in late June 1977, was (somewhat bizarrely) the Philippines, and by the time the film opened in Britain, it was also already playing in some European markets. Science fiction lore has it that *Star Wars* opened in London on Boxing Day 1977, then opened nationally one week later on 2 January 1978, the same day that the first episode of *Blake's 7* was broadcast.

However, a study of trade papers from that time shows that the UK premiere was actually on 27 December, and in two West End cinemas: the Leicester Square Theatre and the

Dominion, Tottenham Court Road, where it took a record-breaking £117,690 in its first week. (The previous London opening week record-holder was *Jaws*, which took £90,655 at four cinemas.) Other science fiction films showing in London that week included: *Dark Star*, *Demon Seed*, *Escape To Witch Mountain*, *Futureworld*, *The Giant Spider Invasion*, *Godzilla Vs. The Cosmic Monster*, *The Island Of Dr. Moreau* and *Flesh Gordon*!

*Star Wars* continued to play exclusively at these two cinemas for over four weeks, with police clamping down on touts who were selling the £2.20 tickets for up to £30 a throw. Then on 29 January it opened in 12 major cities around Britain, followed by a further 16 cinemas in Greater London the following week.

Two other science fiction debuts in Britain in January 1978 were *Blake's 7*, as mentioned, and *Doctor Who*'s chamois-clad assistant Leela, who made her first appearance in Chris Boucher's story "The Face Of Evil". The first season of *The New Avengers* was drawing to a close on TV, while the second season was already in production. Depending on your ITV region, you could also be subjected to *Logan's Run*, *The Man From Atlantis*, *The Six Million Dollar Man* and/or *The Bionic Woman*.

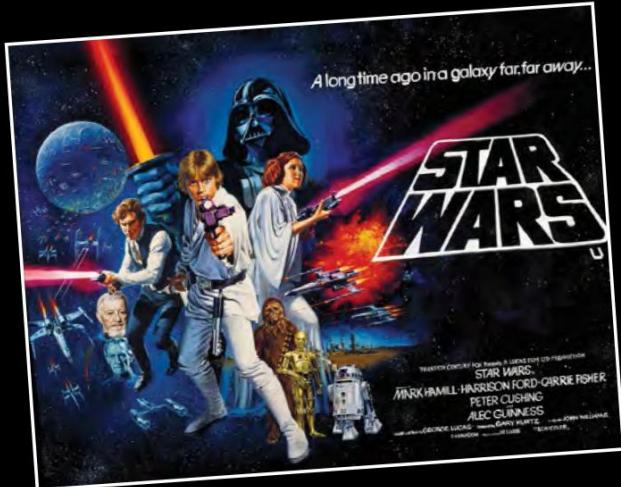
Meanwhile, the first radio series of *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* was being recorded, and a new writer called Orson Scott Card was

receiving acclaim for his debut short story, "Ender's Game". Scariest of all, on 13 December 1977 the BBC had broadcast the pilot of a sci-fi sitcom starring Molly Sugden and written by the guys behind *Are You Being Served?*. Amazingly, despite being in the running for "Worst comedy ever made" *Come Back Mrs Noah* was commissioned for a full series!

## 1977

To give you an idea of what the science fiction climate was like back in 1977 – when *Star Wars* was first released – take a look at this selection of sci-fi and fantasy flicks, all of which were released during the same year...

- *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*, which would have been the top SF movie in any other year.
- The US TV pilot of *Spider-Man* was released theatrically in the UK.
- *The Incredible Melting Man* was an instant low-budget cult hit.
- *The Island Of Dr. Moreau* – poor but still better than the '90s version.
- *Day Of The Animals* was one of many '70s revenge-of-nature pix.
- *Demon Seed* saw Julie Christie raped by a megalomaniacal computer.
- Bond '77-style – *The Spy Who Loved Me*. *Moonraker* came next.
- *Starship Invasions* – starring '70s sci-fi stalwart Robert Vaughn.
- *Kingdom Of The Spiders* – Bill Shatner appeared in this dross.



WE LOVE SCI-FI!

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF TIMELESS SF

# THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

We play a good hand of Star Wars **TOPPS CARDS**



**TARA BENNETT IS THE US EDITOR (EAST COAST) OF SFX**

We geeks all have our seminal moment: the one where we know we're doomed to become abnormally passionate about something, no matter how persecuted we are for it. Mine came when I was in third grade. I was a pretty shy kid who attended Catholic school. I wasn't one for rabble-rousing but on the day I brought in some of my prized '80s era Topps *The Empire Strikes Back* collector cards, I understood for the first time that fiery geek passion ran in my blood.

I was a nerdy kid. When I got a good grade, my reward of choice was a pack of *Star Wars* collector cards. When I found out there were others like me, I brought my favourite cards into class.

On this particular day, we had some mandatory quiet time. I was surreptitiously looking at my cards and Brian, a fellow *Star Wars* nerd, caught wind of my "Han on Hoth" card. When he asked to look at it I slipped him the card under the desk. He pocketed it in silence.

It was like lightning struck over my head. My inner rage immediately flared and I whispered for him to give it back. He put on a smug smile and asked, "Give what back?" I knew I wasn't supposed to talk but he stole from me! Caution was thrown to the wind as I angrily whispered louder to give it back. My teacher turned to me and immediately called me out for speaking. I explained Brian had filched my precious card, thinking that justice would finally be served.

Only it wasn't. Brian wasn't reprimanded. I was, for talking during quiet time and then given my first detention. I sat there stunned at the injustice of the world: my teacher not realising who the real Darth Vader of the situation was and the fact my card was never going to reside in my hands again. My personal Skywalker moment taught me that life can be really unfair.

I eventually got that card in another pack and completed my full set, but my inner Leia was engaged from that moment on and look where it's got me. Thanks, Brian!



## FACT ATTACK!

- The first series of Topps *Star Wars* trading cards (series 1) were released in 1977 with 66 cards and 11 stickers.
- An unopened box of *Star Wars*; series 1 trading cards is worth \$300 today.
- *Empire's* three series of trading cards were delineated by colour: red, blue and yellow borders.
- In 2007, Topps released a *Star Wars* 30th Anniversary

set of 120-base cards with special autographed cards. Some were signed by Harrison Ford.

► *Star Wars* collector cards now cover vintage era, modern era, prequel era, and post-saga era.

► One of the rarest 1977 Topps *Star Wars* cards features C-3PO with equipment placed in a way that some parents called pornographic. It's dubbed the "boner error" card.

WE LOVE SCI-FI!

# ALIENS

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF TIMELESS SF

Getting to grips with **THE POWER LOADER** from James Cameron's spectacular sequel



All together now: "Get away from her..."



**JORDAN FARLEY IS COMMUNITY EDITOR AT SFX. BEFORE THAT HE WAS STAFF WRITER**

For as long as I can remember my favourite film has been *Aliens*. I say as long as I can remember because I first saw the film at a disgustingly young age as part of Sky's "Leading Ladies" season, well before I even saw *Alien*. In fact, it was so long ago I only have three discernible memories from that first viewing: the irritating Lil-Lets sponsorship message which would top and tail every ad break, Bishop coughing up milk (at least that's what it looked like to my naive peepers) and Ripley's canary yellow, flame-throwing, Alien Queen-crushing, heavy-duty hydraulic power loader.

For a child that dreamt he would one day grow up to become a Transformer, you can imagine the effect such a sight had on my tiny noggin. Brains all over the place. Walking from

A to B took twice as long for months and I guarantee you won't see a better robot on the dancefloor this side of a Planet Express party.

Mecha suits were of course nothing new, even at the time. Mecha anime, such as *Gundam*, is a whole sub-genre in Japan and the AT-ST is arguably the best-known mech of them all. But this didn't matter; *Aliens* made the mech suit weirdly aspirational and believably attainable by blending mecha with a powered exoskeleton. Give it a few years and we'd all be strolling round in giant exoskeletons, manual

labour would be a thing of the past and sport would be a lot more fun, or so my pint-sized self believed.

The power loader's final appearance is an immortal moment in movie history, and although the impact has been diluted by endless summer blockbusters capping their meagre offerings with a robotic CG slugfest (*Iron Man*, I'm looking at you), stick a power-loader-esque mech in your movie/game and I'm sold. If it takes Skynet to make mechs a reality, the revolution can't come soon enough.

## FACT ATTACK!

- Want to build your own power-loader costume for Halloween, or just another bug hunt? Someone's created a step-by-step guide just for you: [tinyurl.com/powerloadercostume](http://tinyurl.com/powerloadercostume)
- Famed DVD producer Van Ling got his first break in the business after impressing James Cameron with his own custom-made power-loader suit.
- The film's life-sized power loader was created entirely in-camera and operated by a stunt man tucked away behind Sigourney Weaver.

- The first exoskeleton, named Hardiman, was co-developed by General Electric and the US military in the 1960s. It made lifting 110kg feel like lifting 4.5kg but was impractical due to its 680kg weight.
- Get a Panasonic power loader-style exoskeleton for a mere \$111,500 if you're a bona fide developer and publish your research within a year: [tinyurl.com/powerloaderforsale](http://tinyurl.com/powerloaderforsale)
- The *Alien Anthology* is out now on Blu-ray from Twentieth Century Fox.

# ANATOMY OF A CLASSIC

► RELEASED: 25 May 1979 ► RUNTIME: 117 minutes  
► CERTIFICATE: X ► DIRECTOR: Ridley Scott ► WRITER: Dan O'Bannon  
► STUDIO: Brandywine Productions/Twentieth Century Fox

WORDS IAN BERRIMAN

# ALIEN

We think we should discuss the Ridley Scott space shocker situation



## GIGER'S CREATURE

The biology of the Alien defies any explanation other than the magical. One minute it's less than a foot high; shortly afterwards it's man-sized... how? Wouldn't it have to, er, metabolise huge amounts of protein, or summat? Fortunately, HR Giger's designs are so beguiling that you let that slide. Terrifyingly other yet elegant as a Ferrari, it would almost be a privilege to be gored by it. There's something of the S&M dungeon about it – it's not much of a leap to imagine it cracking a bullwhip and grinding a stiletto heel into your groin, is it? Anyone...? Just me, then.

## RIPLEY

As the prototype ass-kicking female heroine, we think of Ellen Ripley as a fearless Amazon, but one of the pleasures of watching *Alien* is seeing her emerge. Initially she's a peripheral character, and a largely unsympathetic one – a chilly jobsworth, more concerned with sticking to the quarantine rules than the feelings of her colleagues. Later, she has moments of weakness and panic – she's not a superwoman. Over the course of her hero's journey we see Ellen becoming Ripley. The Nostromo is the crucible in which she is forged.

## CLASSIC SCENE: THE CHESTBURSTER



**1** It's the actors' reactions that make it. As John Hurt grimaces, Yaphet Kotto just grins like he's got a bad case of Delhi belly – the facehugger's been forgotten.



**2** Veronica Cartwright knew an alien would emerge, but didn't know she was gonna be sprayed in the face with blood, so her reaction is authentic...



**3** The moment where the chestburster slowly looks around is both eerie and comic, and gives you a sense that this creature could be our intellectual equal.

## JONES THE CAT

Our favourite ginger tom not only provides scares by leaping out at unexpected moments, but also humanises his mistress – ya gotta love a heroine who goes back for her kitty! And when the full-grown Alien makes its first appearance, Jones's reaction sells the moment far better than Harry Dean Stanton's (the cat was actually reacting to a German Shepherd!). Plus, he looks dead cute when he licks his paws. Aw.



## SCRIPT EXTRACT

Special Order 937.  
Science officer eyes only.  
Nostromo rerouted to new co-ordinates.  
Investigate life form. Gather specimen.  
Priority one:  
Ensure return of organism for analysis.  
All other considerations secondary.  
Crew expendable.

## PARKER AND BRETT

Yaphet Kotto's Parker and Harry Dean Stanton's Brett are blue-collar grunts who moan about their pay and wind up their superiors – they're plumbers in space, basically. They ground the story in a recognisable reality we can relate to. In *Alien*, "astronauts" still smoke roll-ups, wear Hawaiian shirts and plaster their bunks with porn. It couldn't be further removed from the anodyne, airbrushed world of *Star Trek*, populated with paragons.



## ASH

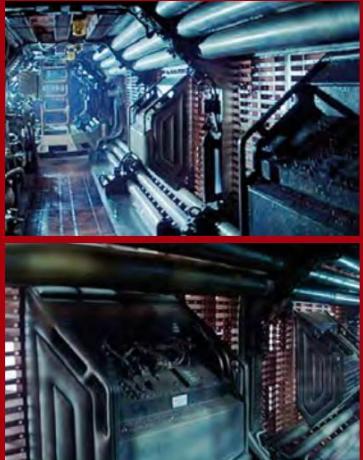
Screenwriter Dan O'Bannon is sniffy about this subplot, inserted into his script by other hands. But while it's true that *Alien* would remain a great movie without it, the revelation that medic Ash is an android, a Company plant there to ensure the creature's survival, is a brilliant twist. Although we're not sure it quite makes sense... how did The Company know that the signal received by the Nostromo would lead them to a "life form"?

## THE DRINKING BIRDS

Nice to see that naff novelties survive into the far-future. Check out the "drinking birds" bobbing in and out of a coffee mug on the Nostromo's dining table! Who brought them along?! It's almost as jarring as if Captain Dallas suddenly roller-skated in wearing a pair of deely-boppers...



## THE GRUNGE AESTHETIC



*Alien*'s set designs aren't a total break from the norm: the computer room is filled with the traditional winking lights; the hypersleep chamber is an immaculate, gleaming white environment; and yes, it has automatic doors that slide open with a hiss. But *Alien*'s grimy, worn surfaces and industrial forms (built up from old aircraft parts) became the new industry standard for spaceship interiors.



## FREUDIAN IMAGERY

The spaceship on the planet surface resembles a splayed pair of legs, accessed through a vaginal aperture. The alien eggs inside (dressed with all sorts of glistening meat products) are a sexophobe's nightmare. The chestburster resembles a snappy-toothed phallus, as do the Alien's drooling, face-penetrating inner jaws. Dripping with perverse, bloody birth imagery and symbolic rapes, *Alien* is a car crash of castration complexes and genital revulsion.

## THE POSTER

Imagine how crass this poster could have been – all gore and guts. Instead, it's a teasing puzzle – what is that thing? An egg? And what's inside? Then marvel at the fact that one of the best tag-lines in movie history – "In space no one can hear your scream" – is whispered in lower-case Helvetica. Classy. Enigmatic. Understated.





WORDS NICK SETCHFIELD

# GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

SFX went on set for what was looking like Marvel's riskiest superhero movie to date...

**W**e're Marvel cosmic," declares James Gunn, writer and director of *Guardians Of The Galaxy*. "We're the outer space wing of Marvel."

Today Shepperton Studios feels more like the outer space wing of some magnificently surreal asylum. As SFX peers at an on-set monitor, a bright green Zoe Saldana is executing a pitch-perfect Michael Jackson yelp while a mime artist in a leotard pretends to be a walking tree. To the left is Dave Bautista, six-time world champion wrestler, his body painted blue and inscribed with inscrutably runic tattoos. Next to him stands Chris Pratt, once the tubby schlub in *Parks And Rec*, now reborn as a ripped interstellar Adonis.

We've already spotted Henry the Hoover

standing idle in a corner of a starship set. It's possibly one of the least unlikely things about a movie poised to hurl a talking raccoon into the summer blockbuster arena.

"*Guardians Of The Galaxy* allows us to explore a whole other side of the Marvel cinematic universe," says associate producer Jonathan Schwartz, explaining why the studio that bankrolled *The Avengers* is now moving beyond Earth, beyond Asgard, and targeting the stars. "It serves as a launching point, in the same way that the first *Iron Man* movie did for the Earthbound universe. This is the most world-building – universe-building – that we've done since that movie. This movie can establish that universe for every other movie that takes place in the cosmic side." Marvel's

push into deep space is a gamble. Some claim that *Guardians* – based on a fan fave comic book space opera with none of the brand might of the big superheroes – is its riskiest property yet.

"It's not even close to the riskiest Marvel property," counters James Gunn. "Iron Man was by far the riskiest Marvel property. That was from a company that didn't have much money, raising money to make a film based on a property that wasn't that much more well-known than *Guardians Of The Galaxy*."

"It took Robert Downey's performance and everything about the first *Iron Man* to make Iron Man the character he is today," adds Schwartz. "And that's the position that the Guardians are in right now – everyone thinks of them as B characters, but at the core we think there's something really cool there that we can turn into something audiences are really going to connect with."

## LIVING ON THE EDGE

Inspired by Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning's acclaimed comic book take, *Guardians* gives us a mismatched, morally scurvy team of cosmic wastrels and reprobates. A-holes assemble...

"They come from a darker place than some of our other heroes," says Schwartz. "They're



Feeling a little bit of the *Star Wars* vibe?

criminals and antiheroes, scumbags and mercenaries, and they don't come from a really great place. Throughout the movie they find it in themselves to become heroes, which is a very different movie than *The Avengers*, who start the movie as heroes then find a way to work together as heroes. It's kind of a new place for us, having that kind of darker origin, but we think it gives the movie a little bit more of an edge, a bit more rock and roll than some of the other stuff. But it still has the same Marvel tone and the same Marvel sense of humour as *The Avengers* did."

"The characters start the farthest from heroism of any Marvel movie so far," says Gunn. "I think of the Avengers as the Beatles and the Guardians are the Rolling Stones."

Gunn brings his own touch of maverick cool to the Marvel universe. Known for such edgy, darkly smirking fare as *Slither*, *Super* and *PG Porn*, he's a wildcard talent to be entrusted with a summer tentpole. How did he get the gig?

"I had to have sex with all the Marvel executives," he deadpans.

He intends to keep his trademark twisted humour intact. "Yeah, I would think so. I mean... twisted is humour. 100 per cent true story: when I turned in my first draft they were really happy with the screenplay, which of course I was overjoyed with. The only comment they had, which was basically from Joss, was that they wanted it to be more James Gunn. I said, 'It's your funeral...'"

There's more to Gunn than a provocative, boundary-baiting wit. *Guardians* sees him channelling a deep, informed love of SF iconography, too. As a peek into the art room at Shepperton testifies, the film steals visual inspiration from the golden age of interplanetary adventure, fused with the more industrial vibe of post-*Star Wars* Hollywood.

"I think of this as a space epic," says Gunn. "*Alien* and *Blade Runner* came out and they were amazingly well production-designed films that had a great look to them, but they also became the linchpin for what everybody else after that based their movies on, that sort of dark and dreary world. What I wanted to do from the beginning was create an extremely colourful big world, like the pulp science fiction movies of the '50s and '60s, but at the same time have

the grittiness of *Blade Runner* or *Alien*, which to me is a masterpiece in terms of how it redefined that look. For me it really is about taking those two things and whatever is my own weird way of looking at the world.

"There were certain artists that I was really inspired by," Gunn continues. "Chris Foss, who is an artist who painted a lot of cool spaceships and landscapes, mostly in the '70s and '80s. He's a guy who I'm a big fan of. He actually worked for us, designing some of the spaceships and stuff. A lot of our colour patterns are based on his work. That's really where it was for me – to be able to create this bright, colourful, fun film that still has some degree of those other movies."

If there's an audience identification figure in Gunn's deranged cosmos it's Chris Pratt. As Peter Quill – alias Star-Lord – he's the de facto leader of the Guardians, an exiled Earthman whose treasured Walkman and its ever-spooling soundtrack of '80s pop cheese provides his last link with home.

"I was looking for someone who was like Robert Downey Jr. in *Iron Man*," says Gunn, "someone who could come along and inhabit this character and add something to what was already there. I didn't want to see Chris because I didn't think he was right for the role. I knew him as the chunky guy on *Parks And Rec*. I was like 'Oh, that seems ridiculous...' Finally I agreed to see him. He came in and he was probably at his chunkiest, because he'd just gained a lot of weight for this Vince Vaughn movie. But he read, and 20 seconds into it I knew he was the guy."

"When you're a writer you always look for who can take what you do and make it better than you imagine,

because most people are doing vanilla versions of what you wrote, and in a less imaginative way than you can imagine it. Chris brought his own personality to this character, and really fit the words perfectly, but he was also himself. Everybody else I thought would kinda get run over by Robert Downey Jr. if they were ever in a movie together. I think that Chris could completely hold his own. He'd exchange barbs with him and then kick his ass."

### COMPANION CHRONICLES

Opposing Pratt and his ragtag scoundrels are Lee Pace as Ronan the Accused and Karen Gillan as the piratical Nebula. The former Amy Pond made a big impression on Gunn.

"I watched *Doctor Who* and I liked it. When *Doctor Who* people auditioned for the movie I would be sure to watch those auditions right away. I liked her on that show but she's really just an amazing actress. In terms of the very, very best reading of anybody throughout this entire process it was Karen reading for Nebula. I fought really hard for her. I fought hard for a lot of them, but I haven't lost one battle yet, so I feel good about that. And there aren't really too many battles... except for Zoe Saldana! She was the one I didn't really want, who was forced upon me!"

Not coincidentally, Zoe Saldana is walking past at this moment. "I came with the package," she smiles. "I brought my own green make-up and everything..."

"Zoe knows this," says Gunn, "but when I pitched the movie one thing I had to come in with was casting ideas. I had casting ideas for everybody, and the first Gamora that I brought up was Zoe."

"For me it's about family, about a bunch of people that don't have a family and how they learn to love each other. Some of them are heroes and some of them aren't really heroes at the end of this movie. I think it's a movie

about giving a shit, really. I think we live in a world where we're taught that not giving a shit is like the coolest thing, and we have kids who are taught that not giving a shit is what's cool. It's a movie about it's really okay to give a shit."

On set, Dave Batista hoists a hefty weapon. "That's the cool thing about being the big musclehead," he rumbles. "You always get the big gun."

"Look at the red light," instructs Gunn. Pratt and Saldana break into song.

"Roxanne," they harmonise, "you don't have to put on the red light..."

It's day 33 of an 84-day shoot. You suspect the madness has barely begun.

*Guardians Of The Galaxy* is out on DVD, Blu-ray and 3D Blu-ray.



Amy Pond's latest modelling assignment was just weird.

**X-MEN 2**



WORDS CALUM WADDELL

# X-MEN 2

In 2003 Bryan Singer brought back Marvel's merry band of mutants for a new movie that maximised the magnificence of its predecessor...

**C**onsidering the current crop of superhero movies it might be difficult to remember that, just a little over a decade ago, the genre was considered to be largely dead in the water. The reason for this was down to a flurry of flops throughout the late 1990s – *Batman & Robin*, *The Phantom* and *Spawn*, each of them driving a further nail into the coffin of the comic book adaptation. Mercy be, then, that a certain Bryan Singer – then something of a critical darling following his success with *The Usual Suspects* (1995) and *Apt Pupil* (1998) – took a career U-turn and opted to tackle a cinematic spin on one of Marvel's prime staples.

"Not everyone realises but Marvel was a bankrupt company when we did the first *X-Men* back in 2000," Singer tells SFX. "Back then I even bought a bunch of stock for a friend's birthday, just because it was so cheap, and now it's worth a fortune [laughs]. I guess, looking back, it was probably about time that people began to take the comic book movie seriously again. It had been a while since there had been a big one like the original *Superman* or the first two *Batman* movies that Tim Burton directed. I think the problem was that during the '90s comic book properties were being rushed into production and that resulted in a lack of care."

Indeed, 2000's *X-Men*, with its solid box office returns, undoubtedly paved the way for such Marvel hits as *Spider-Man*, *Daredevil*,



Bryan Singer directing the usual X-Men suspects.

*Hulk* and even DC's *Batman Begins*. Yet perhaps the most impressive thing about Singer's achievement is not so much his original template but rather the fact he managed to helm an arguably superior sequel.

Let's contemplate this, shall we? Prior to *X2* just how many movies about heroic muscled marauders managed to spawn a superb second instalment? The options are slim – and that includes the fantastically flawed *Superman II*. Yet, with *X2* Singer showed that a franchise flick need not just rehash the same old, same old but, rather, aim for sky-scraping new heights and develop further character depth in the process. Ultimately, the road to *The Dark Knight* begins with *X2...* >>

## X-MEN 2



"There were a lot of things that I wanted to do and explore on the first *X-Men* movie but we simply didn't have the time or resources," remembers Singer. "I always liken the experience to Sam Raimi on *The Evil Dead*. That first movie is good but *Evil Dead 2* is great and that's because Sam got a bigger budget for the sequel and he went back and did all of the things he could not do in the original. That was my feeling when I did *X2*. It was a chance to realise the full potential of the franchise: I finally got to do the opening sequence with Nightcrawler, when he attempts to assassinate the President, which I always wanted to do. I wanted to do something like that in the first film. And I could depict Magneto's escape, that great prison break scene, and there were also a bunch of gags that I wanted in there. It was a chance to occasionally lighten the tone."

### DIGGING DEEPER

If *X-Men* introduced audiences to Marvel's renegade group of well-intentioned super-powered mavericks then *X2* began to delve into loftier issues. The central theme of prejudice was, of course, retained but factors of corruption, terrorism and government warmongering were also brought to the forefront (it's worth noting that when the film was released the Iraq War was in full swing).

"I am really proud of the fact that I was able to sneak these things into the movie because they meant a lot to me," smiles the director. "I mean, at their core both of my *X-Men* movies are about bigotry and intolerance. To have entire scenes dedicated to that also keeps with the nature of the comic books and what I took from them. I think it is worthwhile putting some personal issues into big blockbuster movies – at least so long as you also make sure that your films are entertaining and they do what summer films have to do – deliver humour, fun, action and

special effects. If you do that then the studios don't really care what you stick in the middle. As long as they get the fireworks they are happy! I think that any movie, large or small, needs to have its own heart and soul. If it doesn't have that – or at least touch on interesting themes – then I think it is kind of boring. Take *Star Wars* – it's a great film because it has all kinds of space battles but it is also about 'the Force' and faith. If *Star Wars* taught us anything it should be that you need to have some substance in your mega-budgeted movie."

No doubt also assisting in the crossover appeal of Singer's *X-Men* epics was a cast comprised of some considerable thespian credentials. Oh sure, the guys got to ogle Halle Berry and Rebecca Romijn and the girls had a chance to go gaga for Hugh Jackman but it was, arguably, the stage-studied stylings of Patrick Stewart and Ian

McKellen that really stole the show.

"It was a dream being able to work with these guys," affirms Singer.

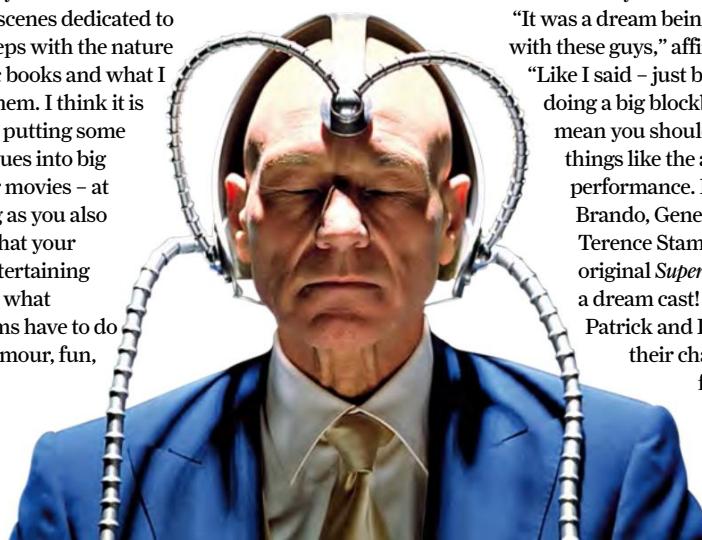
"Like I said – just because you are doing a big blockbuster it doesn't mean you shouldn't care about things like the actor's performance. I mean, Marlon Brando, Gene Hackman and Terence Stamp were in the original *Superman* and that is a dream cast! I think that Patrick and Ian developed their characters even further in *X2* – I



## MASTER OF HORROR

IMAGES: ALLSTAR, RONALD GRANT ARCHIVE, MOVIESTORE

What is the coolest cinema-related clique in the whole of Hollywood? The answer is the Masters of Horror circle – a meeting of macabre minds, over munchies and beverages, that takes place in the LA area and is exclusively attended, and arranged, by such awesome personalities as John Carpenter, Tobe Hooper, Robert Rodriguez, Guillermo del Toro, Quentin Tarantino and many others. A certain Bryan Singer is also a regular attendee. "I am only allowed to attend because I made *Apt Pupil*," admits Singer. "Otherwise they would not invite me. You have to have made a horror film to get in. Spielberg only gets in because he made *Jaws* [laughs]. I went to one dinner and it was a tribute to Ken Russell, just before he died, which was a thrill for me. I have seen *The Devils* about 100 times. I keep telling them that I would love to make a full-blooded horror movie but it has to be the right thing. It would need to be very special – the right monster or the right ghost."





**'I didn't just want to make another throwaway summer blockbuster'**

**BRYAN SINGER**

was extremely happy with their performances and it was a joy to watch them share more screen time. These guys are like family to me now. In fact, I remember the day that we wrapped *X2*. It was with the shot of Patrick Stewart in the snow in Kananaskis – way out in Alberta, Canada. When I called 'cut' he leapt up and said 'Yes! We did it again! We made another one! And this one is going to be even better than the first one. I just know it!' He loved doing these movies. I think that was the main reason that I was sad not to have been on the third one. I remember on my birthday the whole cast called me from the set of *X-Men: The Last Stand* – and I was very emotional. I really wished I could have been there."

#### **SHOOTING THE BREEZE**

Singer also reports that *X2* was a remarkably laid-back shoot with little studio interference.

"Well here's the thing," he begins. "When you are doing something that costs hundreds of millions of dollars it is probably a good idea to make sure that you and the studio are on the same page. That has always been my top priority – I want to know that we both understand the type of

movie that we are making. If there is some conflict then let's iron it out before we start shooting, you know? So yes, of course there is pressure there – doing a big blockbuster is daunting – but you can't freak out about it. You need to know exactly what you are getting into."

Thankfully, Twentieth Century Fox's trust in Singer paid off once more and *X2* was one of the biggest hits of the 2003 summer season, grossing over \$400 million at the box office. Couple this with the super-sized success of Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man* reboot the previous year and it was clear that further comic book capers were all-but-guaranteed...

"I think it is easy to look back and say that but, honestly, there is no formula for doing blockbusters," replies Singer. "I mean, yeah, *X-Men*, *Spider-Man* and *X2* made Marvel hot in Hollywood again but I think sometimes people assume that they know what it takes for a film to make money and now you see all kinds of comic book adaptations – and not all of them work. I guess the cost of doing films is so high, and the risk is so big, that sometimes it means movies become homogenised. The result is that directors don't always have the opportunity to make things that are as inventive or as clever as they could be and that is because films have to make money. That is why when I did *X-Men* and then *X2* I attempted to take all the good notes and throw away the bad ones. I didn't just want to make another throwaway summer blockbuster."

Unfortunately, *X2* wasn't immediately followed by another Singer-directed *X-Men*: "It

## **SINGER AND SCI-FI**



Despite kicking off his career with the arthouse idiosyncrasies of 1993's *Public Access* and 1995's *The Usual Suspects*, Singer admits that his heart was always in making a move towards more genre-oriented outings.

"I have always been primarily a sci-fi fan," he reveals. "All of my favourite films are genre films. But predominantly sci-fi and fantasy films require quite a lot of resources – so when I was just starting out that made it difficult to debut with something like that. What I also like about sci-fi is that the fans of these films are real fans – they are totally dedicated to the universe that you are bringing to life. My first consideration in making a film is the genre audience. I want to please them because that was me once. I was the young nerd who couldn't wait for the next *Star Wars* or *Star Trek* sequel."

was certainly a little weird," he laughs when asked how he felt about Brett Ratner taking over the reins of the franchise with 2006's *X-Men: The Last Stand*. "I was busy with *Superman Returns* and I know that the third film was made under a lot of pressure. I think that Brett did a great job with the resources that he had. I may not have killed quite as many characters as he did, but that's really my only niggle [laughs]."

Five years later Singer returned to produce 2011's acclaimed *X-Men: First Class*, then directed its follow-up *Days Of Future Past* and is charged with its 2016 sequel, *Apocalypse*. But he seems to be happy whatever his work duties...

"There was a whole load of stuff I got to contribute to *X-Men: First Class*," he says. "And that was great because I didn't have to direct it. Someone else had that burden [laughs]. So the idea of coming onboard for more *X-Men* movies as a producer is extremely tempting!"



# ANATOMY OF A CLASSIC

► RELEASED: 10 December 1978 ► RUNTIME: 143 minutes  
► CERTIFICATE: A ► DIRECTOR: Richard Donner  
► WRITERS: Mario Puzo, David & Leslie Newman, Robert Benton, Tom Mankiewicz (uncredited) ► STUDIO: Warner Bros

## CLASSIC DIALOGUE

**Superman:** "Is that how a warped brain like yours gets its kicks? By planning the death of innocent people?"  
**Lex Luthor:** "No. By causing the death of innocent people."

WORDS NICK SETCHFIELD

# SUPERMAN

The film that proved a man can fly...



### KRYPTON

*Superman* delivers a brand new vision of the Man of Steel's homeworld. Scrapping the primary-coloured *Flash Gordon* trappings of the comic books, John Barry builds a new realm of glacial majesty, remote and forbidding. From

our first glimpse of Krypton's citadel of ice to Jor-El's mystical crystal tech, it's a vision far removed from the grease, grime and rust of the *Star Wars* universe. This Krypton is a fully realised alien world that highlights the essential humanity of its last son.

### VERISIMILITUDE



That was the word enshrined on set, the memo to every creative department. "It refers to being real—not realistic, but real," explained director Richard Donner, and it permeated every aspect of the production, elevating the movie beyond mere popcorn fodder. Donner dispensed with *Godfather* writer Mario Puzo's screenplay, littered

as it was with such high-camp excesses as Kryptonians named Kru-El and Kojak cameos (the bald TV cop was mistaken for Lex Luthor). In its place came a profound reverence for its four-colour source material, a commitment to the magic saturating those cheap, woodpulp pages. "We were dealing with Americana," said Donner, simply.

### JOHN WILLIAMS'S SCORE



Williams was the go-to guy for fantasy blockbuster scores in the late '70s. He'd followed the minimalist dread of *Jaws* with the full-blooded old school romance of *Star Wars*, a soundtrack that redefined Hollywood music. His *Superman* march is a classic, building from lonesome call to arms through pulse-quicken propulsive rush into glorious, soaring flight—yes, you'll believe an orchestra can fly. But his other contributions are equally worthy, from the doomed nobility of the Krypton score to the Love Theme, a melody so gorgeous that not even Margot Kidder's white girl rap ("You can fly! You belong in the sky!") can diminish it.

### BRANDO

Just like Alec Guinness in *Star Wars*, Brando brings a grandeur and a gravitas to *Superman*—and more than that, a soul. Paid a shocking \$3.7 million (and a percentage of the profits) for a 12-day shoot, his Jor-El manages to make the phrase Fortress of Solitude sound like poetry. Still riding his Oscar-winning success as Don Corleone in *The Godfather*, Brando was yet to begin his descent into the bloated and tabloid-stoking celebrity tragedy of his twilight years. Remember him this way: part god, part Elvis.





## WORLDS WITHIN WORLDS

*Superman* repeatedly shifts cinematic terrain. The opening Krypton scenes echo with the feeling of doomy '70s sci-fi – it's the same coldness you sense in *THX 1138* or *The Andromeda Strain*, one step removed from everyday emotions. We cut abruptly to the Norman Rockwell palette and heartland lyricism of the Smallville scenes, all Bill Haley, cheerleaders and brightening prairie skies. Then we're thrown into the flip, nervy, urban '70s of Metropolis, midway between *Annie Hall* and *The French Connection*, before the film sidesteps again into widescreen disaster movie mode, chasing *Earthquake* and *The Towering Inferno*. It's dizzying, but it works.



## CHRISTOPHER REEVE



How do you cast an icon? The filmmakers trawled the planet, from box office certs (Warren Beatty, Robert Redford) to Beverly Hills dentists – with a baffling interlude where Muhammad Ali was in the frame. But in Christopher Reeve they bottled lightning. This 26-year-old stage actor perfectly embodied the sincerity, decency and Eagle Scout charm of Superman, bringing blood and soul to the pen and ink bones of Siegel and Shuster's creation. And as stumbly, stuttery klutz Clark Kent (a turn modelled on Cary Grant in *Bringing Up Baby*) you suspect Superman is having almost as much fun as Reeve is.

## AS THE WORLD TURNS

The climax of *Superman* is genuinely audacious. Confronted by the death of Lois, afire with grief and rage, Superman defies the decree of Jor-El and spins the world back on its axis, reversing the flow of time. Now you can scoff at this, call it a cheat – but hold on here. How huge, how dramatic, how brilliant is this moment? A man changes the rotation of the Earth, rewrites the laws of physics, defies death itself – all in the name of love? That's no easy piece of narrative fudging. That's grand. That's awesome. That's bloody Superman, that is.



## A DREAM OF FLIGHT



"You'll believe a man can fly" vowed the poster – and the creatives knew that without the credible illusion of flight there would be no movie. Early tests reveal laff-fest experiments with cartoon doubles and inflatable men shot from air cannons. They finally licked it with a combination of forward projection and a specially designed zoom system, but it's the sheer belief of Christopher Reeve that sells the flying sequences. The '50s TV show gave us a Superman who treated flight like physical exertion (star George Reeves trampolined out of shot). *Superman* gives us a Man of Steel who knows that the graceful defiance of gravity is his birthright.

## CLASSIC SCENE SUPES STUNS CITY!



1 Lois in peril! The *Daily Planet*'s most disaster-prone journo clings for dear life from a toppled chopper. It's a Health and Safety issue alright.



2 Clark dashes in search of a trusty phonebox (in a great sight-gag, they're all too small and modern) as he performs the classic comic book shirt-rip.

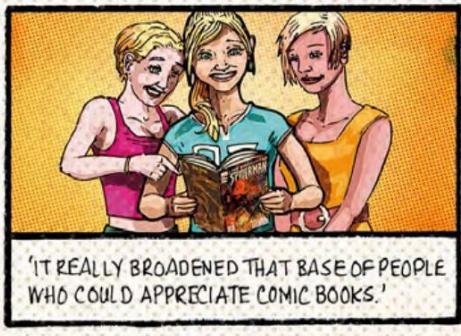
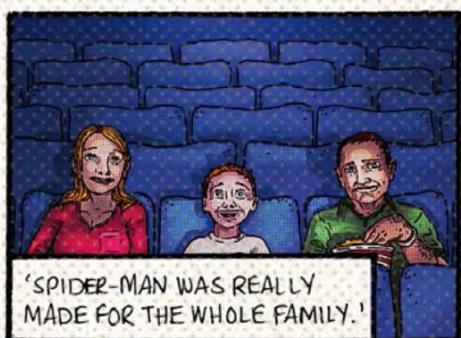


3 "You've got me? Who's got you?" Supes rescues Lois – it's traditional – and Margot Kidder caps the whole sequence with the perfect payoff.

# SPIDER-MAN

HE'S THE WEBSLINGER WHO KEPT ON SAVING NEW YORK, WHILE ALL THE TIME ONLY WANTING MARY JANE'S HEART... SAM RAIMI TALKS US THROUGH THE DNA OF SPIDER-MAN.





## TERMINATOR 2



IMAGES COURTESY THE KOBAL COLLECTION (1), BFI (1)

WORDS LUKE DORMEHL

# TERMINATOR 2

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# JUDGMENT DAY

Some sequels more than top the originals: this was the movie that was a fantastic thrill-ride and also one that changed cinematic special effects forever



Arnie having his make-up done for the climactic scenes.

**T**he script for *Terminator 2* stated that the end of the world as we know it would come about on 29 August 1997. Were you to ask Mario Kassar and Peter Hoffman for their prediction in the early part of 1991, they may well have told you to bring it forward six years.

Kassar and Hoffman were movie execs at Carolco Pictures. One year earlier the upstart production company had been flying high – throwing a party at the Cannes festival with Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sly Stallone, Clint Eastwood, Oliver Stone and James Cameron (among others) that was so opulent that it is still talked about today. Carolco's previous blockbuster, Paul Verhoeven's *Total Recall*, had done excellent box office, and all involved had

been excited about making a follow-up to Cameron's 1984 low budget sci-fi actioner, *The Terminator*. Then it all went wrong. Cameron, it turned out, was a renegade director; a mercurial artist who, it seemed, could feign producer-speak only as long as it took for him to get the money he needed to make his film, at which point he transformed into a different, altogether trickier, customer. Suddenly all of the stories Kassar and Hoffman had heard through the rumour mill ("Think of root canal and start from there," was how one Hollywood executive described working with the director) began to make sense. Only it was too late. And with the film's budget creeping ever closer to – and eventually surpassing – \$100 million, they were starting to panic.

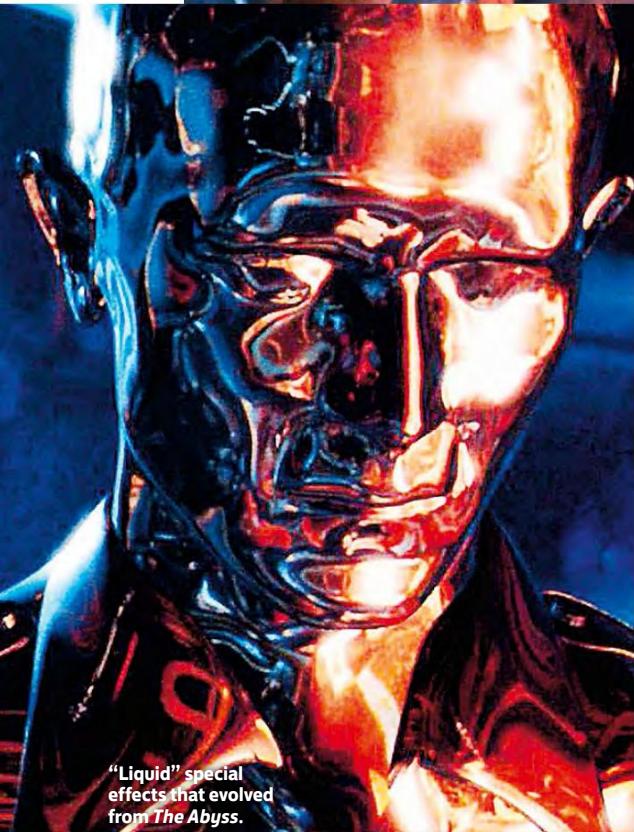
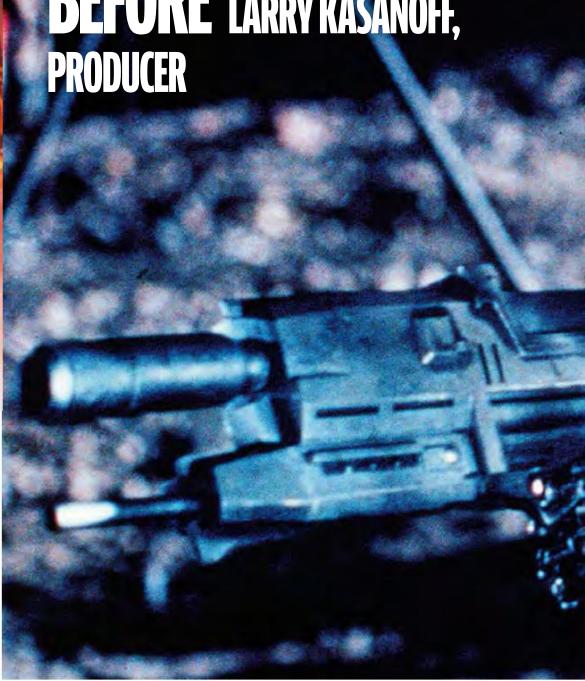
"The big issue was that Carolco had given their bank one number that the movie was going to cost, but that wasn't the number we had told them, and nor was that the number that they had agreed to with us," James Cameron's producer at the time, Larry Kasanoff, tells SFX. "And the press promptly found out about it." Indeed, as would prove to be the case with every major Cameron production from this point on, the bottom line – which was the equivalent of almost four average film budgets at the time – was all anybody was interested in discussing. Not the groundbreaking special effects work. Not the fact that *T2*'s 13-year-old young lead, playing a youthful John Connor, had been plucked off the street with no prior acting experience ("It wasn't something that I planned," actor Edward Furlong would say later.) And not Cameron's remarkable ability to shoot action scenes, the likes of which had never been seen before – and rarely seen since.

But although *Terminator 2* ultimately proved to be the most expensive film ever made at the time of its release, Cameron kept on shooting; secure in the knowledge that the movie he was making was turning out to be every bit as great as he >>

## TERMINATOR 2



**'THE MORPHING EFFECTS HAD NEVER REALLY BEEN DONE BEFORE'** LARRY KASANOFF, PRODUCER



imagined it. "A lot of directors need a lot of producers' help," says Kasanoff. "Jim is not one of them."

### SCHWARTZ AND ALL

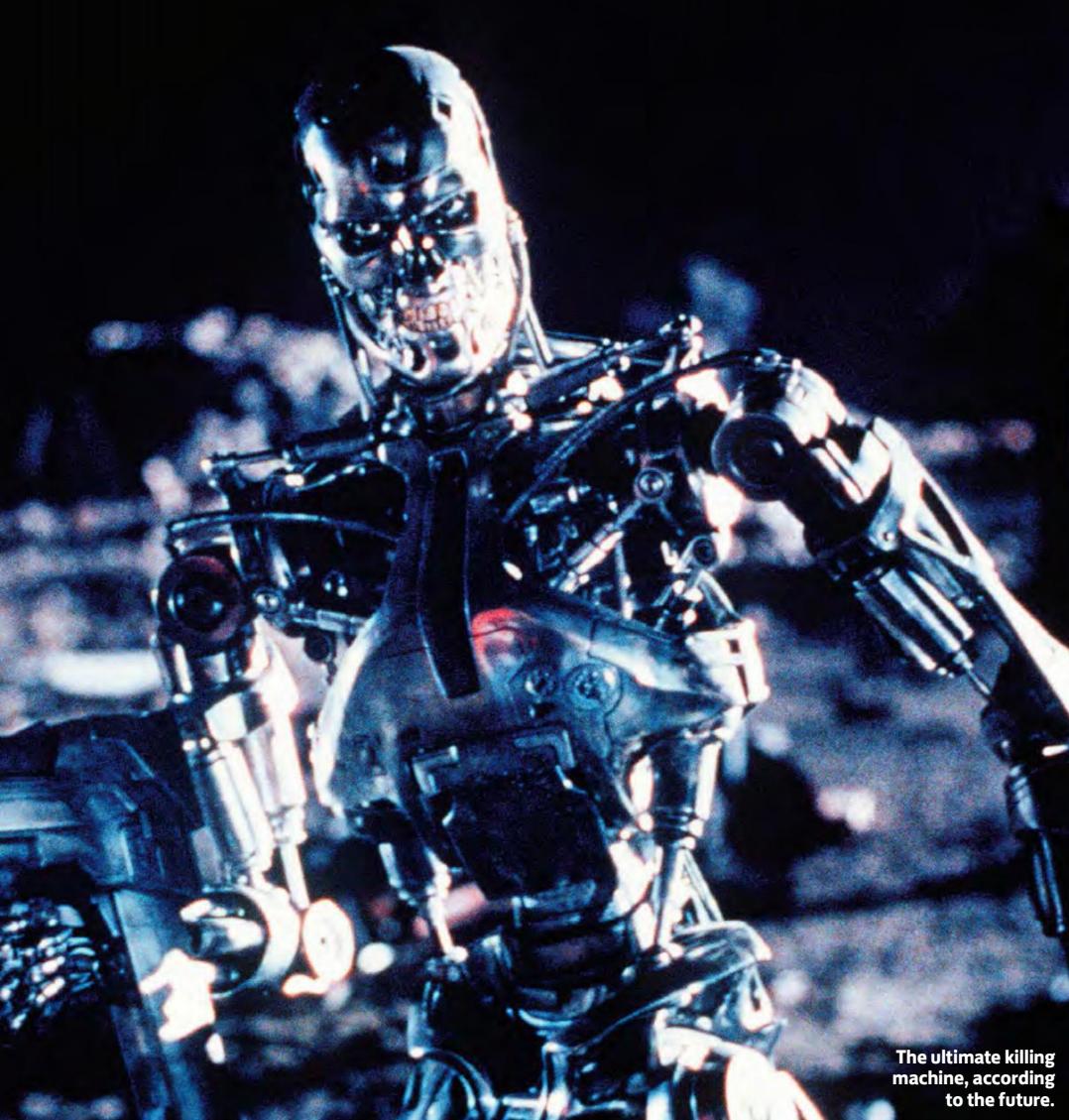
"Arnold was phenomenal," Kasanoff gushes. "He was so unbelievably great." It is little exaggeration to say that Schwarzenegger, at the time *Terminator 2* was released, was one of the biggest stars in the world. Twelve years before he made the move into politics, and despite his heavily accented English, he was a born orator, the kind of person whose charisma and force of personality alone were able to dazzle people into going along with him. "The first time that I met Arnold, *T2* had just been greenlit and we were in a meeting at TriStar [Pictures] to talk about it," Kasanoff recalls. "He stood up in front of me and Jim [Cameron], the marketing and production VPs and the head of the studio, and gave a speech that just made you want to stand up and cheer. He said, 'We did a good job on *Total Recall*, yes, but you have to wake up every morning and ask yourself what can we do to make this an even better movie. What can we do to make *Terminator 2* the greatest film of all time?' At that moment I honestly believed that if this man was American-born he would be the President of the United States."

Reprising his role as the Terminator (incidentally, check out the film's specially shot teaser trailer – directed by special effects guru Stan Winston on a budget of \$150,000 – which details the construction process of the T-800 model), *T2* acts as a neat bridge in Schwarzenegger's career, bringing together the tough guy Arnie-of-the-'80s with the kinder, gentler Arnie-of-the-'90s. "Here's an example of how involved he was with every facet of production," says Kasanoff. "One of the things

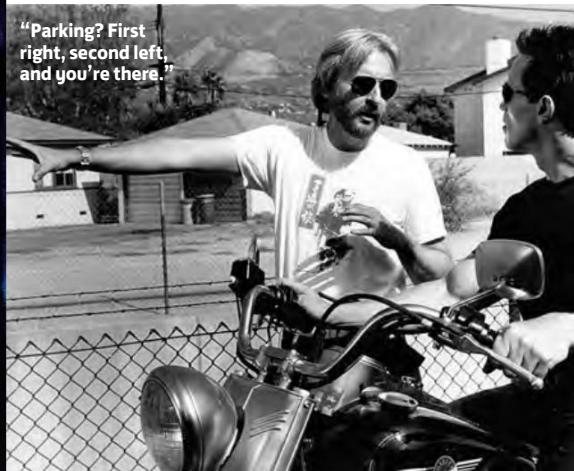
### T2 TRIV STUFF YOU SHOULD KNOW

- According to a deleted scene featuring the T-1000, the liquid metal Terminator cannot see – it "samples" the molecular structure of objects by touch.
- Since John Connor was born on 28 February 1985, and is 10 years old when *T2* takes place, the film is set in 1995 – although certain aspects of the script suggest '94. The future scenes, showing the fall of Skynet, take place on 11 July 2029.
- The sound of the T-1000 walking through the metal bars was created by holding a can of open dog food upside down and recording the sound of the closely packed food slowly oozing out.
- The abilities of the T-800 (the Schwarzenegger model) include calculating the distance of objects; analysing body structure, textures and temperatures; doing kinetic studies of trajectories; sampling and analysing the atmosphere; calculating gravity; and imitating human speech. It also has modern laptops beat – its power cell gives it 120 years of charge.
- The Cyberdyne building in the film is a real location in Fremont, a suburb of San Jose. Currently it is home to the Renco Investment Company. Additional floors were added for the movie so that James Cameron could blow them up.





The ultimate killing machine, according to the future.



pioneering, and exciting, use of computer graphics. Cameron had toyed with using CGI provided by George Lucas's Industrial Light & Magic visual effects company on his previous film – 1989's *The Abyss* (in which every effect had to fit into 900MB of online storage) – but *Terminator 2*'s pre- and post-apocalyptic environment stretched the boundaries of what was possible to achieve with the effects of the day to almost breaking point. Most notably, of course, was the "nanomorph mimetic poly-alloy" T-1000 Terminator (played in eminently creepy human form by actor Robert Patrick). "The concept of the liquid metal man was an idea that I had had a good ten years earlier when I was conceptualising the first film," Cameron has said. "There was no way to do it – Claymation was the only thing I could think of back in the early '80s and I didn't think that was going to be mind-blowing enough. So when we got to [*Terminator 2*] the residue of that early idea was still floating around, but in the meantime we had done *The Abyss* so there was some proof of concept that some kind of liquid character could actually be done. That ultimately became the T-1000."

#### RADICALLY DIFFERENT

"You've got to understand the morphing effects, which two years later were ubiquitous, had never really been done," Kasanoff says. "The pressure on Jim to make sure that that was going to work was intense. People in Hollywood have a tendency to be sycophants as well – and to say what they think Jim wanted to hear, when he asked whether a particular effect worked or not – but obviously that's not going to help once the film comes out. But thank god it all worked out in the end. And I think it changed the way that movies are made forever."

I wanted to do was to put together a music video for the film, because back then if you could get a good music video it would get played 15 times a day on MTV. So I asked him whether he would do it, and he said, 'Only if you get the best band in the world to do it.' And I said, 'OK, who's the best?' And Arnold thought about it and came back to me and said, 'If you get Guns N' Roses I'm in.' But to get them there was a lot of schmoozing with the band and Arnold and Maria [Shriver] invited the band over to their house for dinner one night, and sure enough they agreed."

#### W.W.S.C.D. (WHAT WOULD SARAH CONNOR DO?)

Also returning from the first film was Linda Hamilton, who once again portrayed Sarah Connor, in what was undoubtedly the biggest role of her career. Playing a stronger, more psychologically robust character than she did in the first *Terminator* (noting the irony that she begins the movie locked in a mental institution), in this all-action sequel Connor had matured into the arse-kicking, gear-shifting heroine that James Cameron scripts are made of. Originally Cameron wanted to underline this new harder edge to the character by giving her a prominent scar down one side of her face – even going so far as to do make-up tests – but ditched the idea when he realised how complex it would be to recreate the special effect each day of production. "I really wanted her to look like Tom Berenger in *Platoon*," Cameron has said. "And Linda was up for it,

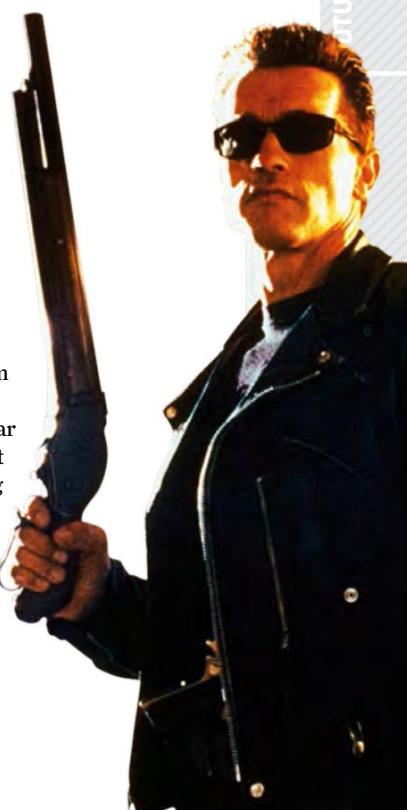
because the last thing she had done was playing Beauty in *Beauty And The Beast* for three years."

Although she narrates the film's opening and closing monologue, what is most notable about Sarah Connor's part in *T2* is just how surplus she is to requirements. The leading women in James Cameron's movies are generally maternal figures; a characteristic shared by Ellen Ripley – Cameron's previous screen heroine in *Aliens* – and Connor in the *Terminator* films. In *T2*, however, Arnie himself plays the nurturing protector; his role as surrogate mother underlined by the figurative castration that is his inability to use his gun to its full lethal potential.

And neither is Connor needed to ramp up the sex quota of the movie. While movie bosses probably liked the idea of an attractive lady on the poster to help sell tickets (and Cameron – the person – himself obviously fancied Linda Hamilton, since the two got married a few years later), Cameron – the director – has only ever had eyes for high technology. The sex appeal in *T2* is in the oozing 3D graphics of the liquid metal of the T-1000 and the fetishistic detail with which Cameron renders his favourite big vehicles (from the shooting script: "The Kenworth tow-truck ... is all muscle, tearing along the canal like a train in a tunnel. Its big tires send up huge sheets of muddy spray, backlit in the setting sun").

Who needs a pin-up when you've got a big Kenworth tow-truck, eh?

If *T2* had a long-term cinematic impact there can be little argument that it came from the film's



# ANATOMY OF A CLASSIC

► RELEASED: 4 December 1985 ► RUNTIME: 116 minutes  
► CERTIFICATE: PG ► DIRECTOR: Robert Zemeckis  
► WRITERS: Robert Zemeckis, Bob Gale  
► STUDIO: Amblin Entertainment/ Universal Pictures

WORDS RICHARD EDWARDS

# BACK TO THE FUTURE

We accelerate to 88mph and look at what makes Back To The Future tick

## MARTY AND THE DOC



It's never explained why a normal teenager of average intelligence would hang around with a scientist old enough to be his grandad yet you never question the relationship at the centre of the movie. They're one of '80s cinema's great double acts, each supported by a sparkling script unafraid to let dialogue overshadow visual pyrotechnics.

And even with the hindsight that comes from watching the movie 50-something times, Marty's failed attempts to warn the Doc of his impending death at the hands of Libyans are genuinely heartbreakingly

## NO SLACK

The super-efficient *Back To The Future* script should be held up as an example to all aspiring screenwriters. Nearly every scene advances the narrative, whether it's sneaking in a crafty glimpse at the sights and sounds of 1985 Hill Valley courtesy of Marty's skateboard voyages, or the woman collecting money for the "Save the Clocktower" campaign – surely the most important chugger in cinema history. The only exception is Marty's slightly indulgent rendition of "Johnny B. Goode", and that's excused because it helped Chuck Berry invent rock and roll.

MAIN IMAGE: STEVE SCHAPIRO/CORBIS



## ACTING UP

Lea Thompson, Crispin Glover and Thomas F. Wilson probably didn't relish the hours they spent in the make-up chair to play the 47-year-old versions of their characters, but their sacrifice was well worth it. Zemeckis could easily have hired middle-aged look-alikes to play the older Lorraine, George and Biff, but would have had to waste precious screentime establishing they're the same girl, nerd and jock 30 years on – and lost the comedy potential of the comb-overed, overweight nobody Biff has become.



## IN-JOKES

Few films pull off the self-referential gag quite as well or as often as *Back To The Future*, and it's not all blatantly obvious jokes like Marty being named after his Calvin Klein underwear, or Doc Brown getting flummoxed by the prospect of jobbing actor Ronald Reagan becoming President of the USA. Some are genuinely subtle: for example, only the truly eagle-eyed will spot that Twin Pines Mall has become Lone Pine Mall come the end of the movie, thanks to Marty's unintentional demolition of Old Man Peabody's evergreen breeding programme.



## THE DELOREAN

If Gale and Zemeckis had stuck with their original idea of building the time machine into a fridge – exec producer Steven Spielberg was worried about copycat kids climbing inside electrical appliances – it's unlikely we'd be writing this now. The use of a DeLorean with the optional extra of a Flux Capacitor is inspired, and it's not just about that stainless steel exterior (though the gullwing doors do allow for a flying saucer gag when Marty first arrives in 1955). The innards are perfectly realised too, from the ludicrously named Flux Capacitor, labelled with suitably lo-fi Dymo tape, to those digital destination boards. If you grew up in the '80s, this is the car you want in your garage.



## CONTRIVANCE



Examine *Back To The Future*'s time travel too closely and you'll come up with three decades of questions. However, it's the liberties that Zemeckis and Gale take with logic that make the movie hang together. So while it seems unlikely that the space-time

continuum would see fit to gradually erase a picture of Marty's brother and sister, you've got to admit it's one hell of a plot device. As for the convenience of Marty travelling back 30 years to the time when his parents were exactly the age he is now... Well, it does make all the maths a whole lot easier.

## SELF-CONTAINMENT

"Roads? Where we're going we don't need roads." It's one of the best set-ups for a sequel in history, but it wouldn't matter if Parts II and III had never been made. *BTTF* belongs to a select band of movies (the original *Star Wars*, *The Matrix*) that manage to keep a clear beginning, middle and end, while opening the door to a wider universe. All summer blockbusters should take note.



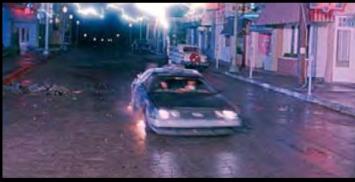
## CLASSIC SCENE: HIGH STREET BLUES



1 A nod to silent star Harold Lloyd, as Doc Brown rocks around the Clocktower – scientist and daredevil rolled into one.



2 Alan Silvestri's classic theme tune gets the adrenalin flowing as Doc Brown whizzes down a zip line to fix a short circuit.



3 The car hits 88mph and Marty heads back to the future. A scene so good they chose to include it in all three *Back To The Future* movies.

## CLASSIC LINES

**Doc:** "Wait a minute, Doc. You're telling me you built a time machine. Out of a DeLorean?"

**Doc:** "The way I see it, if you're going to build a time machine into a car, why not do it with some style. Besides, the stainless steel construction made the flux dispersal..."

[Doc is interrupted by the DeLorean reappearing from one minute earlier]

## HILL VALLEY

The Hill Valley of 1955 may be a rose-tinted slice of apple pie Americana that never really existed, but thanks to some clever set design, you completely buy that it'll turn into the slightly rundown town Marty calls home 30 years later. Filmed on the Universal backlot set that also played host to *Gremlins*, recurring landmarks like the all-important Clocktower help highlight the differences elsewhere – the diner turned fitness boutique and the changing face of the petrol station ensure that while the when changes, the where stays very much the same.





WORDS JAMIE GRAHAM ADDITIONAL REPORTING ROSIE FLETCHER

# EDGE OF TOMORROW

Caught in a 24hr time loop, Tom Cruise bites the dust again and again as he defends Earth from alien attack. Edge Of Tomorrow proves the future's bright for the world's biggest movie star...

The world has seen every single movie Tom Cruise has ever done, so to come up with a character he *hasn't* played before...” director Doug Liman grins. “He's like a total coward in this movie! Like, not just in the beginning and then he becomes the hero – he is a coward all the way through! The number of times he squeals in the movie out of fear... Tom does an amazing squeal.”

Liman has made a career out of confounding expectations. Scoring a jackpot with so-money indie *Swingers* and then holding fiercely on to his guerrilla credentials while making tentpole movies like *The Bourne Identity* and *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, he is not a man to play it safe. Thus, turning the world's biggest movie star into a snivelling yellow-belly who'd rather anyone but him was charged with saving the world from an alien invasion was all in a day's work.

Intriguingly, Liman's supersized project *Edge Of Tomorrow*, based on Hiroshi

Sakurazaka's novel *All You Need Is Kill* and a script that was on 2010's Black List, is also about a day's work. Well, one day played over and over, as Cruise's Lt. Col. William Cage finds himself caught in a time loop as he wages war on the intergalactic foe (Mimics) that are taking over Europe. Each time he dies (“If you hate Tom Cruise, he dies, like, 200 times in the movie!” jokes Liman), time rewinds by 24 hours and he's back into the thick of the action once more, first having to find a way to survive a coastal battle that rivals the beach landing in *Saving Private Ryan*, and then needing to figure out a way to put an end to the alien threat.

“Bill Cage is responsible for media relations,” explains Cruise. *Total Film* last spoke to him after he'd just finished the first day's shooting on *Edge Of Tomorrow*, and his excitement back then was almost as strong as his handshake (“It was awesome, so much fun!”). Several months later, it's only amplified.

“Bill's really the PR guy who designed the campaign to recruit troops and help bring America into this global conflict. He's having a very easy war and then he ends up, through mistakes he's made politically, in the invasion.” And he lives it, of course, over and over...

“I always wanted to work with Doug Liman,” says Cruise. “He turns a genre on its head. The structure is very unique. The alien invasion film has become a trope. People understand the language of the genre and now we can really get into this fun character journey. The film is dramatic, it's emotional, it has a tremendous amount of humour, and action. And the structure is so complex.”

Liman nods in agreement. Ensnioned in the Corinthia Hotel, a stone's throw from Trafalgar Square where one of the movie's most impressive set-pieces takes place (more of which later), his unruly hair is sprinkled with grey above a set of impressively bushy



**Bad day:** Behind the scenes shots of Cruise and (top left) Emily Blunt in action.



eyebrows. "We had to map out some crazy, convoluted timelines," he says. "We had to figure out the rules. He goes back to the same starting point and the only things he can change are his own actions. But if he acts differently, then someone else acts differently, though they all start out wanting to act the same way. Once you've figured out how Tom would act on the first day, and then the second day [and so on], it's sort of easy to figure out how that would affect the people around him."

Got that? Good, because that's just the start. Things are made *really* screwy by the presence of Rita Vrataski (Emily Blunt), a hardened co-soldier who is "affectionately" nicknamed "The Full Metal Bitch" by her fellow combatants. Vrataski was once also afflicted with the reset mode (it's caused by being infected with the blood of the Mimics), and though she's now out of the spin-cycle, she's amassed huge experience on the battlefield, making her a lethal weapon who's emotionally shut-down. "I loved the story," Blunt begins, wide-eyed. "I thought it was the most unusual love story I've ever come across. And I was really drawn to playing the character because she's such a badass. She's seen a lot of bad things."

Reset. *Love* story? That's right, this being a Doug Liman movie, it mixes and mashes genres as surely as it zigs and zags in startling directions. It's a sci-fi film, an action movie, a war picture and, yes, a romance. Blunt shakes her head at the craziness of it all. "Rita is in a weird position because Cage has probably known her for thousands of days and she just met him that morning! I think that's off-putting for anybody, to not be sure what happened the day before. As their relationship progresses, she can see in the way he's interacting with her that there's a familiarity from him that she's receiving, but she's not feeling herself."

It's a bizarre, really rather brilliant set-up – *Groundhog Day*-meets-*Starship Troopers* but shot in a *vérité* style – and it was catnip to Liman's iconoclastic sensibilities. "I thought, 'Wow, this is something that is totally original, and

completely fun *and* smart'. And I thought, 'Y'know, what a unique opportunity, because you can find projects that are really original, and they're just not that much fun, or you can find things that seem really fun but you've seen it before'. But when you can find something as exciting *and* as fun as this is..." When Liman gets excited, there's no stopping him. His sharp, staccato sentences increase in pace and his voice gets louder. "I mean, I get excited by daunting prospects. The more challenging, the better. This film was *so* challenging. Suddenly life on the set of *The Bourne Identity* seemed so much simpler and happier, and god knows that was anything but a happy set for me [Liman repeatedly banged heads with Universal due to his insistence of doing his own thing in his own way]. At night, I'd fall asleep and dream about a film I'm hoping to make which is set on Mount Everest, and I was like, 'Oh, how nice life will be. I'll be shooting at 26,000ft – compared to *Edge Of Tomorrow*, that seems positively easy'."

#### FULL METAL JACKET

Not that the filmmaker chose to make things easy for himself or his cast. Shooting on Warner Bros' new 200-acre Leavesden complex in southeast England, he had a degree of control regarding the elements, in that they could move indoors or out, but his insistence on real action and real exo-suits caused heartache (and muscle-ache) aplenty.

"I didn't want to make a CG movie, I wanted to do a movie that felt real," says Liman with a what-of-it? shrug. "I would just watch trailers for blockbusters that were coming out, and they all looked fake. So I was like, 'Well, alright, how do we make the exo-suit look real? It probably actually has to *be* real. We have to actually build the suit'."

Liman brought in experts who design cars for a living and between them they fashioned a functional exo-suit comprising 250 parts, with each part needing to be separately manufactured. It was a process that he

describes as "more complex than my first three films combined". And then came the really difficult part... wearing the damn things. "The one that I was wearing weighed anywhere from 80 to 120 pounds, depending on the kind of armour we had on it," says Cruise. "So doing stunts with it was... interesting. You get whacked pretty hard with that suit!"

"Early on I looked at some of the actors and I could see them sweating," Liman recalls. "It was really physically taxing. But Tom set the benchmark and the end result is worth it, because when you look at the movie, there's an honesty to it that's really not there in your traditional summer blockbuster."

Honesty or no, Cruise and his co-stars had to endure terrific amounts of training to get to a place where they could be in any sort of condition to don the suits – made of heavy-duty plastic – and make it look authentic. To rise from the ground (or even to run) required assistance from cables and cranes. Blunt winces at the painful memory of it all.

"I had a three-month training period before the film even began," she huffs with a roll of the eyes. "We did everything. Krav Maga, that lethal Israeli martial art in which you use everything, including your teeth, to annihilate somebody as quickly as possible. That was apparently to unleash my aggression. And then I did a month of stunt training, a lot of wire work which I'd never done before – because our fighting style is very aerial-based – gymnastics, yoga, weight training, track running, all of that stuff with stamina. I did a lot of training with a weight vest on, just to start to feel what it would be like to run with extra weight. But the weight vest didn't do the suit any justice. So, when I showed up and actually put the exo-suit on, it almost made me cry."

Blunt's too modest to say it herself, but she was more than up to the task. Liman calls her "the strongest actress of her generation: smart, funny, beautiful, charming" – and says it was vital to have her as the foil to Cruise's coward. "In my personal life I'm surrounded by >>

‘THE NUMBER OF TIMES TOM CRUISE SQUEALS OUT OF FEAR IN THIS MOVIE...’

DOUG LIMAN, DIRECTOR



insanely strong women,” he says, “and I’m proud of the strong female characters that I’ve put on screen consistently. Emily as the female lead is going to be stronger than Tom’s character, more heroic. I think the world would be a better place if we had more female leaders.”

Not that Liman and Cruise are exactly wimps themselves. These are guys renowned for going the extra mile, and on *Edge Of Tomorrow* they managed to sneak in extra takes in front of a green screen in Liman’s personal editing suite. Such guerrilla tactics alarmed Warner Bros in their flouting of union rules. But for director and star, it needed gruelling seven-day weeks to get everything they wanted – even if that meant Cruise doing his own hair and make-up for the crafty visits to the cutting bay.

As much as his famous work ethic, Cruise is renowned for making things happen that others can’t. Here, it was his intervention that helped secure the nod to shut down London’s Trafalgar Square for three hours on a Sunday morning.

Liman beams. “Yeah, we got this incredible permission to land this real Air Force helicopter in Trafalgar Square,” he begins. “The idea was that Tom was going to get off the helicopter and was going right into the scene. We were going to have 11 camera crews there, everyone dressed in fatigues in case one camera crew filmed another camera crew – it’d look like they were military!”

First rehearsing the scene on the Leavesden backlot, they quickly realised the chopper’s

noise meant any and all communication was impossible. Practice runs without the chopper took place and then more practice runs *with* the chopper once every beat of the action was mapped out in order that it could unfurl smoothly, with zero direction.

“Thank god we had that rehearsal,” laughs Liman, remembering the moment the helicopter finally touched down smoothly next to Nelson’s Column. “It went off without a hitch.” As much as anything, he had Cruise’s staunch professionalism to thank for that... “I didn’t even know this until afterwards,” Liman continues, “but there was also a camera crew on the helicopter with him, and the helicopter had to do such an insane bank to land that the DoP was throwing up. And Tom steps off the helicopter with a big smile, like, y’know, nothing’s wrong, just in character. In the helicopter, people were barfing!”

Given the scale of *Edge Of Tomorrow* and the intensity of the war sequences, perhaps the biggest surprise in a film full of surprises is that it’s also very funny. Liman shows *Total Film* several sequences from the movie – Cruise first arriving at the army base and being screamed at like a newbie grunt; in a plane about to be dropped into battle but unable to get his gun off safety; visceral battlefield footage that matches anything in *Black Hawk Down* – and the thing that leaps out is the film’s perverse, absurdist humour.

“Tom’s playing someone way in over his head,” says Blunt. “He’s so funny in this role. He’s not playing the average action stuff. He’s

playing someone who’s terrified at the sight of blood and now he’s having to take on the role of saving the entire world! And he nails it.”

“We never called the film *All You Need Is Kill*,” says Liman of his newly-monikered movie, “but we did call it *AYNIK* as a nickname. I was finding the tone of the film as I went. I personally believe in humour. I’m Jewish, and I find my relatives bring humour to the darkest moments. But I didn’t know Tom was going to be as funny as he was. Once we found the tone, *All You Need Is Kill* was far too dark a title.”

Liman is clearly proud of his movie – as we talk he is just two weeks from finishing, with just some visual effects in the third act to be tidied up – and our chat concludes with him again stressing its originality and idiosyncrasies. “Recent films that have dealt with aliens, the characters have been awful,” he says. “They don’t give actors characters to play, they’re like, ‘Oh, shoot that alien!’ Repeating the day over and over again brings out more interesting elements, in the same way, y’know, having Mrs. Smith as your wife will bring out what’s interesting about Mr. Smith. I’m not going to make a cookie-cutter film, I’m a little more rebellious.”

Fortunately, Liman and Cruise were fully encouraged in their vision. “There was no pressure from Warner Bros to make this look like a standard studio film,” says the director. “They wanted something fresh, something you haven’t seen before, and I ended up with a film that I’m extremely proud of.”



# LOOPER

Brick duo Rian Johnson and Joseph Gordon-Levitt reteamed for a movie with brains, balls and Bruce Willis...

WORDS ROSIE FLETCHER

**S**o you're me in 30 years?" says Joseph Gordon-Levitt, staring into the worn but still ruggedly handsome face of movie megastar Bruce Willis in the blistering trailer for time-travel actioner *Looper*. It's not out of the question...

On paper a complicated sci-fi from indie filmmaker Rian Johnson (*Brick* and *The Brothers Bloom* did modest box office), looks no more like a genre-changing blockbuster than, well, Joseph Gordon-Levitt looks like Bruce Willis – but that hasn't stopped either from making brave choices that pay off in a smart and dynamic film.

Gordon-Levitt waxes lyrical about the project and both Willis and co-star Emily Blunt have said it's the best thing they've ever done.

"There's a tendency in mainstream Hollywood to talk down to the audience," says Gordon-Levitt. "It's just an excuse to be lazy. You can point at the work of Chris Nolan – he

doesn't talk down to the audience at all, and audiences love him for it. Rian isn't interested in talking down to his audience. He's interested in making movies that he would love – making them clear and making them well. You can invite an audience into it without condescending."

Inviting the audience in means Bruce Willis shoots up shit with both barrels, JG-L fights the bad guys to save the world while romancing Emily Blunt's country gal, Jeff Daniels' corrupt old sage is sent back from the future... Consider us seduced. But this isn't just that. This is an alternate universe where everything is constantly shifting, where the heroes aren't heroic, the villains not truly villainous. It's a time travel movie that isn't really about time travel, in a future world both strange and familiar...

"Part of the fun of this movie specifically is figuring out where it's going," smiles 38-year-

old Johnson, fiddling with coffee spoons in a San Diego restaurant where early *Looper* footage has just screened to rapturous applause in Comic-Con's Hall H. "Just when you think you know what kind of movie it is, it's turned into a different one. Hopefully when it settles at the end everything makes sense, but part of the fun is feeling what kind of animal you're riding!"

It's a complex, headstrong and skittish beast indeed. Take the plot: the year 2074 – a totalitarian state. Time travel exists but is strictly outlawed, used only by a powerful gang of organised criminals to dispose of targets they want to kill and dump in the past.

The year 2044 – hired assassins called "Loopers" efficiently annihilate marks sent back from the future, erasing them from their own timelines. Joe (Gordon-Levitt) is one such assassin. His next target? His future self (Willis). **>>**

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It's the starting point of a film which heads for territories darker and more labyrinthine by the minute, evoking everything from *Witness* to *Akira*, *Blade Runner* to *Carrie*, *The Matrix* to Nolan's similarly brain-stretching blockbuster *Inception* – itself a head-scratcher that features a key role for Gordon-Levitt. And hey, *Inception* grossed \$817m worldwide, unequivocally displaying that mainstream audiences can cope with clever. With the final ferocious instalment of the *Dark Knight* trilogy smashing the box office globally once again (with Gordon-Levitt in tow), Nolan's clearly a trailblazing influence. "I love the fact he's obliterated this false notion that huge movies can't also be interesting – that you either have to have something on your mind or you can make a big fun movie," Johnson affirms.

But if Nolan and Willis are the visions of the future for Johnson and Gordon-Levitt, the ghosts of their younger selves still lurk. The two met on slick, gritty, stylised teen-noir *Brick* – Johnson's first feature and the movie which (after breakout turns in Jordan Melamed's *Manic* and Greg Araki's *Mysterious Skin*) redefined perceptions of Gordon-Levitt. "With *Brick*, both Rian and I had something to prove," nods Gordon-Levitt. "It was his first movie and I was mostly known for being on a television comedy (*3rd Rock From The Sun*). We were both out to show what we could do. With this one, I think we're more mature, more confident people who can take on a bigger thing."

The two stayed friends, desperate to work together again, and when Johnson decided to develop the script from a short he'd made pre-*Brick* he wrote the central part of "Joe" with Gordon-Levitt in mind, bringing him on as exec producer and sharing early drafts of the script with his name attached. Willis signed up later.

## WILLIS SIGNS ON

"Bruce was the first person that we sent it to and he said yes really quickly. He was so perfect for the role, not just because he's a really good actor, but specifically because he's Bruce Willis, and the film plays with what the audience is expecting..." says Johnson, going on to clarify in details too spoilerish to print. It's all perfect in every way except the glaringly obvious one – that Willis and Gordon-Levitt look nothing alike.

"Yeah, sure, I was worried about that," laughs Gordon-Levitt. "But that's what I love most in acting – trying to transform myself, becoming something different from what I am." The physical transformation involved three hours in the make-up chair every day for Gordon-Levitt, with prosthetic make-up guru Kazuhiro Tsuji working his magic. "We just picked a few key features to change. We just figured that if we did a little bit to the nose, a little bit to the lips, just to get enough of a handle, you could go with that," says Johnson. "Once I saw Joe's performance, that's when I stopped sweating bullets."

The transformation is something of a



Fire power: (top) Bruce Willis gets the big guns out; Joseph Gordon-Levitt with fellow Looper Paul Dano.





# 'RIAN ISN'T INTERESTED IN TALKING DOWN TO HIS AUDIENCE'

## JOSEPH GORDON-LEVITT

Emily Blunt also gets in on the gun-toting action.

revelation – from the posture, the swagger, the eyebrow-twitch, the low, rasping voice. “I watched a lot of [Willis’] movies – *Sin City* was probably the one I watched the most,” says Gordon-Levitt. “I think the thing I focused on the most was his voice. I would take the audio off his movies and put it on the iPod and I would listen repeatedly. He recorded himself doing some of my voiceover lines, so I could hear how he’d sound saying them. But more than that it was just hanging out with him. Just getting to know him, having dinner and talking – that’s what I took from the most.”

Even the big man himself was impressed. “It’s really a strange thing to see someone that looks like a young version of yourself, and he’s a great actor. I love his work and I just love what he did in this film,” Willis says. “He picked up some of my cadence of speaking, which was odd and, yet, really cool at the same time.”

Not a simulacrum of a young Willis then, rather a plausible seed of someone who could turn into the embittered older Joe that Willis embodies – a performance that Willis seems to have infused with a little Levitt-iness too, softening his schtick, making room for story to take precedence rather than turning it into a look-alike competition.

Blunt’s part – as blonde-haired, hard-assed, farm-working Midwest American Sara – was another risky transformation, another casting leap of faith that paid off.

“She and her family get embroiled in all this mess when Joe lets Bruce go on the run,” Blunt laughs, in her conspicuously RP English accent. “The hardest thing I had to do was learn how to convincingly cut wood. I had logs transported to my house in LA to learn how to do that.” And Sara has further surprises as the narrative unfolds. “Emily’s part in the movie is the part I’m most proud of. It’s the part that I’m really excited for audiences to be blindsided by,” teases Johnson.

### JUST A LITTLE BIT ALIEN

The director’s vision of a future world takes the same tack – recognisable enough not to jar, alien enough to give scope for extra-normal possibilities. “It stems from me making the decision that the world was not the point of the movie,” says Johnson. “This wasn’t going to be about a big conceptual future. I figured there was enough already that we were asking the audience to wrap their heads around.

“We’ve gone for a dystopian future look where everyone in the movie is trying to hold onto their little piece of whatever they have. I figured let’s make the streets feel as dangerous and broken down as possible so you really sense that if these people lost their pile of gold, they’re destitute. It made sense storywise. We did some creative fun things, but to a certain extent it’s shorthand – it’s a near-future that you recognise a little bit and that your brain can instantly accept.”

Any tricks and gimmicks on the surface of *Looper* seem to be dealt with in the same way, with even time travel itself being a means to an end. “Giving it permission to be messy was one of the essential building blocks,” says Johnson. “It’s very much like the first *Terminator*: time travel sets up this situation and then gets out the way.”

So it’s a sci-fi, an actioner, a love story, a horror movie, a dystopian nightmare, a tale of sacrifice and redemption, a fun event movie and a pub-debate magnet. And a project opening doors to a world of possibilities for all involved.

Certainly JG-L’s horizon is one to keep your eyes on, with a lead role in chase caper *Premium Rush* to come, followed by Spielberg’s *Lincoln* and his own directorial debut *Don Jon*. The future Bruce Willis? OK, maybe Levitt won’t be popping up in *The Expendables 2042*, but a leading man at the top of his game and one of the most promising actors and interesting filmmakers of his generation? Count on it.

“I don’t even know on how many sets I’ve watched directors do a great job. Last year I got to work on a movie with Rian, then with Chris Nolan, then with Steven Spielberg, so I got to see three, who are in my opinion the best alive, do it.”

The three best directors alive: Spielberg. Nolan. Johnson. Based on this evidence, it’s not out of the question...

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# THE TERMINATOR

## CLASSIC SCENE

Sarah Connor reveals a core of steel...



**T**he decision was to not do a man in a suit," says writer/director James Cameron of the unstoppable cyborg stalking his 1984 time-travel classic. "We had to sell the idea that it was the suit inside the man." Augmented by Arnie's fish-eyed menace and Stan Winston's astonishing make-up, it's the climactic big reveal that makes good on this promise. Having burned off its "skin" in a petrol tanker explosion, the Terminator emerges from the flames "like death rendered in steel" (as Cameron's original treatment puts it). Tracking reluctant saviour Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) and soldier-of-the-future Kyle Reese (Michael Biehn) across a factory floor, it survives a pipe beating – and a pipe bomb – to make good on that other promise: "It absolutely will not stop, ever, until you are dead." But it's not just the T-800 showing its mettle. As Sarah finally crushes her quarry with a victorious "You're terminated, f\*cker!", her transformation from waitress to warrior queen is complete.

### Setting the scene

- Harlan Ellison won an out of court settlement and a film credit after claiming the film drew from two of his *Outer Limits* episodes. Cameron says the concept came to him in a feverish dream while shooting *Piranha II*: he saw "a metallic death figure rising Phoenix-like out of the fire".
- Lance Henriksen was the early favourite to play the Terminator as an ordinary-looking infiltration machine. Arnie was in talks to play Kyle Reese.
- The shoot was delayed for nearly a year to fit Arnie's schedule. This allowed Cameron to storyboard all the SFX sequences and Michael Biehn to practise shooting guns and hot-wiring cars.

**PARTING SHOT**  
In honour of Sarah's immortal pay-off line, the promotional material for the film included a bumper sticker bearing the legend: "Touch my car and you're terminated, sucker." We'd kill for one.

**METAL MAN**  
Stan Winston persuaded Cameron to combine a full-sized endoskeleton model, puppetry and animatronics rather than just stop-motion. The endo design went through many versions before Winston went back to Cameron's original concept painting.

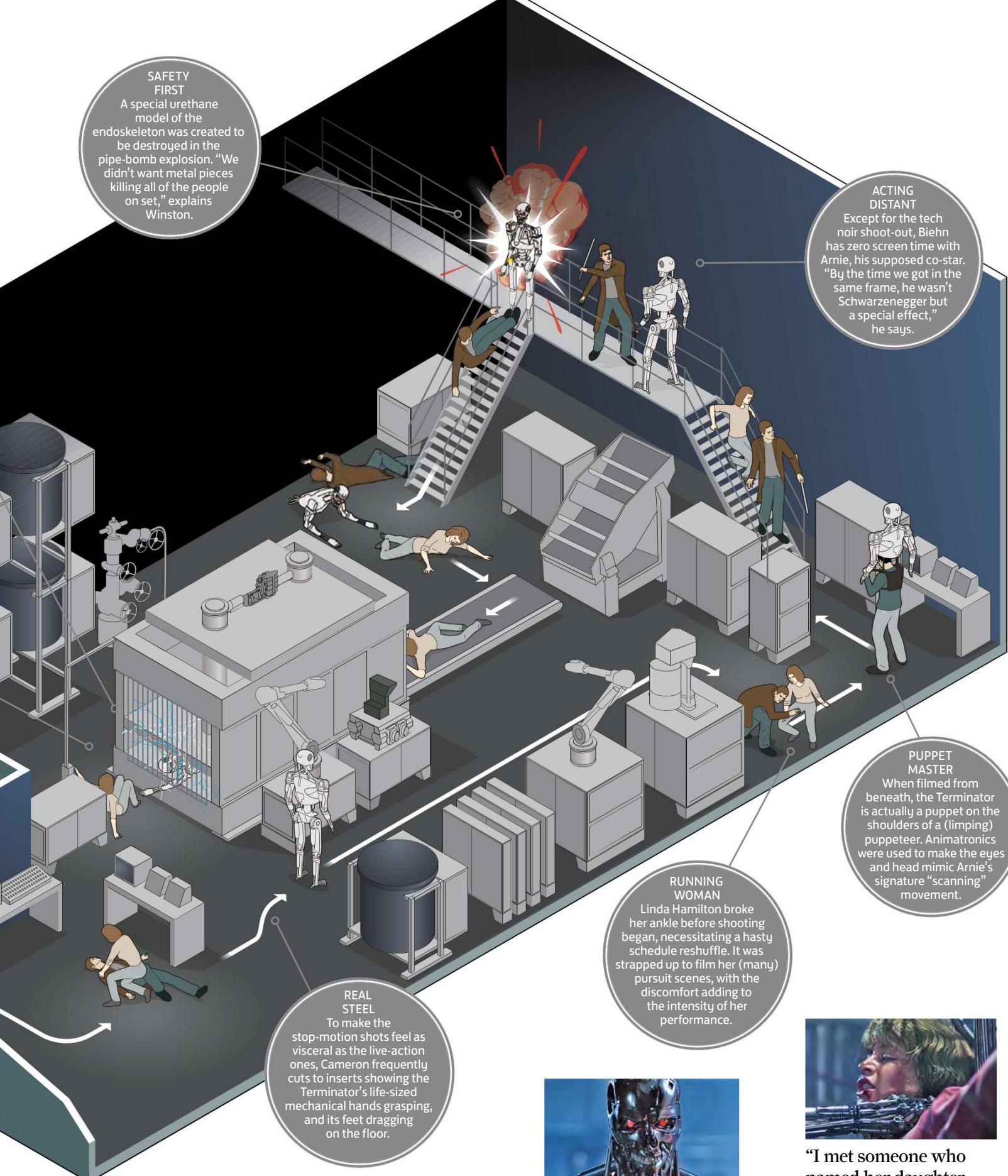


"There was a point where he [the Terminator] blows up and I go: 'If he gets up one more time, I'm leaving!'"

**Brad Fiedel, composer**

**RED LIGHTS**  
The insert of the Terminator's microprocessor "dying" was shot after filming wrapped. Winston used a light bulb (for its eye), some silver-sprayed foam (for the press), and cigarette smoke (for dramatic effect).





“By the time all was said and done, Jim had sketched every detail of the endoskeleton. And I ended up taking the credit.”

Stan Winston, make-up/SFX



“The powers that be demanded: ‘When the truck blows up, the film has to end.’ I said: ‘No, it’s not done yet.’”

James Cameron, writer/director



“I met someone who named her daughter Linda Sarah. Linda after me, Sarah after Sarah Connor... she was the definitive strong female character in cinema at the time.”

Linda Hamilton, actress

WORDS LUKE DORMEHL

# JURASSIC PARK

Twenty-one years after it first took a big bite out of the box office, we take a look at Spielberg's dino-tastic epic





**T**he clue that Steven Spielberg couldn't be content simply making a film about dinosaurs, that whatever film he created on the subject would have to be an "event" capable of propelling itself off the screen and into the audience, can be found – as with so many things – in the director's childhood.

In 1960, when Spielberg was a 13-year-old living in Scottsdale, Arizona, the Irwin Allen dinosaur movie *The Lost World* ("150,000,000 years ago or today?") came to one of the big cinemas in Phoenix, a half-hour drive from his

house. "My friends and I took a lot of white bread and mixed it with milk, Parmesan cheese, creamed corn and peas," he later recalled. "We put this foul-smelling mixture into bags, went to the movie, and sat in the highest balcony. At the most exciting part, we made vomiting sounds and squeezed the solution over the balcony on the people below. We did it for laughs. Little did we realise that it would begin a chain reaction of throwing up. The movie was stopped, the houselights came on, and ushers appeared with their flashlights – ready to kill us ... We raced out the fire escape exit."

Jump eight years to 1968, and Spielberg had just signed a contract with Universal, which

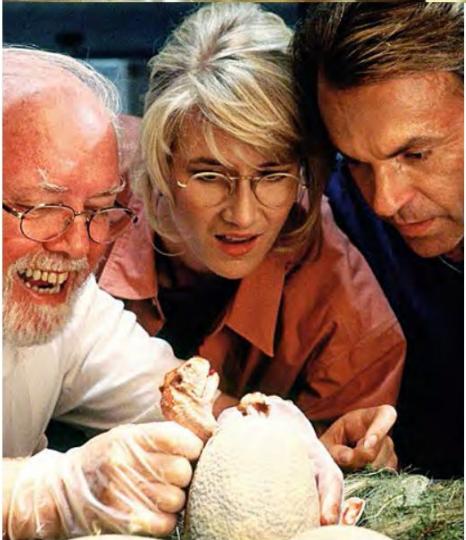
would see him direct several episodes of television before making the leap to features. One day he was assigned the job of giving a tour of the studio to a young writer who had just sold the rights to his novel, *The Andromeda Strain*. Michael Crichton and Spielberg got talking. Leap forward another two decades to an autumn day in October 1989, and Spielberg and Crichton – richer, more experienced, and with grey hairs starting to speckle their heads – were sitting in Spielberg's office in Hollywood, California, discussing changes to a draft script based upon Crichton's experiences as a medical student in a busy A&E department, which would eventually become *ER*. During a lapse in the conversation, Spielberg asked Crichton if he was working on anything else at that moment. "Actually, I've just finished something," Crichton replied. "It's a thriller about dinosaurs. It's been submitted to my publishers to proof." "I'd love to read it," Spielberg said, and convinced Crichton to mail over an advance copy.

The next day Crichton's phone rang. It was Spielberg – excited. "There's going to be a real hot bidding war for this," Spielberg said. "I'm sure of it." >>

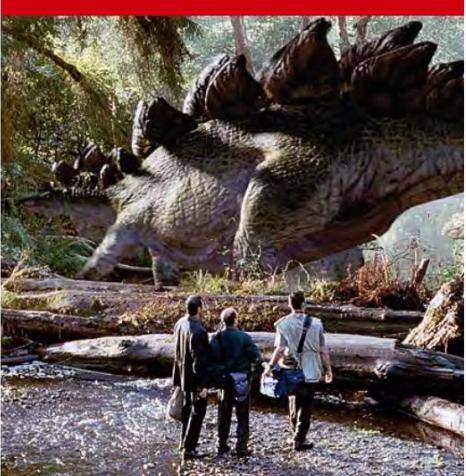
## JURASSIC PARK



Gordon Ramsay's kitchen has got nothing on this.



### EXTINCTION COMES TO THOSE WHO WAIT



"We're out of a job," Alan Grant says when he first sees evidence that dinosaurs have been brought back to life. "Don't you mean 'extinct'?" counters Dr. Ian Malcolm. The inspiration for the line came from stop-motion maestro Phil Tippett when he uttered a variation on it while watching a CGI test of the movie's T-rex. Until *Jurassic Park*, ILM's computer graphics division had only been used to create brief CGI elements for films such as *Young Sherlock Holmes* and *Terminator 2*. *Jurassic Park* was the first time they were used to create large-scale characters. From this point on, no stop-motion artist was safe!

As usual, Spielberg's instincts weren't wrong. When the film rights for Crichton's seventeenth novel, *Jurassic Park*, were put up for sale (a \$2 million minimum designed to root out time-wasters) almost every major studio in Hollywood jumped to have a piece of the action. The studios – each with their own chosen director handpicked for the job of bringing Crichton's vision to life – offered a tantalising glimpse of *Jurassic Park* adaptations that never were. Warner Brothers, for example, had Tim Burton in mind for a potential helmer; summoning up ghostly spectres of stop-motion dinosaurs and Johnny Depp as a Velociraptor. Fox, meanwhile, wanted Joe Dante, less than a decade removed from *Gremlins*, while Columbia fancied *Superman* and *Lethal Weapon* director Richard Donner for the gig. In the end, Universal outbid all – its eye firmly on Spielberg – and Michael Crichton set about writing the screenplay.

### IN THE FUTURE, THERE WILL BE DINOSAURS

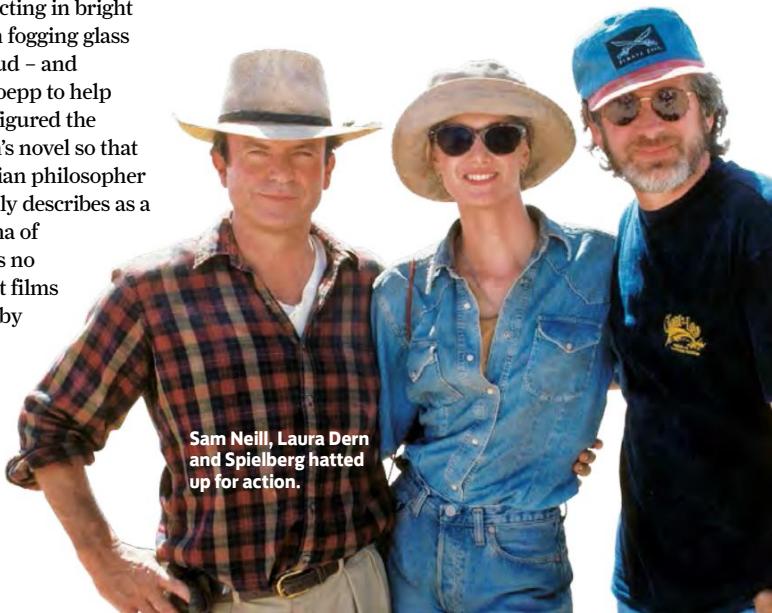
First attempts were poorly received. As with many of Crichton's novels, much of the book's thrill came from its almost-believable use of scientific theory to explain away what seemed otherwise implausible. That was fine for a pop-science thriller, but less acceptable when put into the mouths of film characters as exposition in a potential blockbuster. Spielberg had a series of images he wanted to build the film around – dino-pupils contracting in bright light; snorting, prehistoric breath fogging glass windows; giant feet squishing mud – and brought in screenwriter David Koepp to help realise this vision. He also reconfigured the cardboard characters of Crichton's novel so that the story resembled what Slovenian philosopher and film theorist Slavoj Žižek aptly describes as a "chamber drama about the trauma of fatherhood". This should come as no surprise. Many of Spielberg's best films are about fatherhood, populated by lonely children and distant, or altogether absent, patriarchs. In the shooting script, palaeontologist Alan Grant's story arc – in which the



**'SPIELBERG ULTIMATELY EARNED \$250 MILLION FROM HIS INVOLVEMENT'**

character played by New Zealand actor Sam Neill evolves from disliking children to becoming something of a surrogate father – becomes the heart of the film's human story.

Of course, from the moment the heavy gates swing open and the words "Welcome to Jurassic Park" are spoken, the movie's main attraction is the dinosaurs themselves – despite their only taking up 15 minutes of the total running time. Of these 15 minutes, nine were created by the Stan Winston Studio in Hollywood. Winston, who passed away in 2008 at the age of 62, was



Sam Neill, Laura Dern and Spielberg hatted up for action.



Sam Neill goes down to the woods yesterday.

asked to come aboard the film following his work on James Cameron's *Aliens*. To Winston, Spielberg gave the job of creating the film's most memorable dinosaur: the Tyrannosaurus rex.

"Steven figured that if we could build a 14-foot-tall Alien Queen, we'd be able to build a 20-foot-tall T-rex," Winston noted. "That turned out to be a somewhat naive assumption. There was a big difference between building that Alien Queen and building a full-size dinosaur. There were no muscles, no flesh, and there was no real weight to it. The Alien Queen also didn't have to look like a real, organic animal because it was a fictional character – so there was nothing in real life to compare it to." This didn't stop him agreeing to work on *Jurassic Park*, though. "How are you going to do it?" Spielberg asked early on. "I haven't got a clue," Winston replied, "but we'll figure it out."

In the end, a one-fifth scale clay model was created, which was then transformed into a puppet by Winston and his associates, while animators at Industrial Light and Magic scanned the model also, and used it to create the film's groundbreaking digital shots.

Publicity materials for *Jurassic Park* – 21 years old this year – described it as "An adventure 65 million years in the making". There might be a hint of truth in this, but it is a mistake to think

that any moment during the reign of cinema, before or since, would have seen the film reach the spectacular heights that it did. *Jurassic Park* connected fully with the zeitgeist in a way that is rarely seen. Part of the reason for this, perhaps, is what the film represented. The Berlin Wall had come down not five years earlier, and what better way to celebrate the triumph of American capitalism than going back to the start of history? One could argue that with communism gone, dinosaurs were a similar relic of the past over which the United States could triumph. But this forgets the film's real stars: not Alan Grant and his pals, but the dinos themselves. The genetic tampering which brings them into existence represents the winning combination of science, engineering and commercialisation which some would say characterises American capitalism.

#### A LICENCE TO PRINT MONEY

That it would somehow grow out of control, become too unwieldy to be constrained any longer, and revenge itself upon its masters by gobbling them up seems startlingly close to social criticism. We know, of course, that this was not beyond the reach of Michael Crichton, for whom thrillers offered a way to explore social issues. Spielberg on the other hand? This crisis of

## LIFE, UH... FINDS A WAY



If *Jaws* begat *Alligator*, *Day Of The Animals*, *Eaten Alive*, *Great White*, *Grizzly*, *The Jaws Of Death*, *Jaws Of Satan*, *Orca*, *Piranha* and *Tentacles*, then the dino-mania kicked off by *Jurassic Park* launched a whole host of new Mesozoic monster movies into the atmosphere: a trend that continues today. Among the more notable suspects are the *Carnosaur* series – the first of which actually beat *Jurassic Park* to the screen by two weeks; the abysmal *Raptor Island*; the more promising *Anonymous Rex*, about a Velociraptor private investigator; and *100 Million BC*, about a group of Navy SEALs travelling back in time.

direction concerning the film's ultimate meaning can be seen most obviously when looking at the character of John Hammond, the wealthy industrialist who opens *Jurassic Park*. In Crichton's novel, Hammond is a deeply unpleasant individual, suspected of circumventing the law to carry out his illicit gene tampering. With his unlimited resources but limited ethics and emotional intelligence, Hammond's "childlike quality" serves as the ultimate example of humanity's irresponsibility and wanton excess.

For the less cynical Spielberg, on the other hand, a "childlike quality" is exactly the trait that allowed his films to reach the top of the box office. What are *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind* or *E.T.* if not a precocious child's view of the world and its problems? As the childlike man behind *Jurassic Park* the film, Spielberg was well aware of what it would mean to criticise the childlike creator of *Jurassic Park* the amusement park. The desolate shot of Hammond (played by the purposely sympathetic Richard Attenborough) spooning jelly into his mouth as his park implodes is less a moment of realisation about the folly of messing with nature than it is sadness that this likely means the rest of the world won't be able to join in: like a Hollywood director whose film has failed to open big at the box office, in other words.

Spielberg never had to face up to this problem, of course. *Jurassic Park* opened with a roar; breaking box office records with the ease of a T-rex crashing through a deactivated electric fence. A survey conducted the year of the film's release stated that an incredible 98 per cent of the US population had heard the name of the film repeated some 25.2 times, while Spielberg agreed to license the film's logo for an astonishing 1,500 items in a deal worth \$28 million. The director himself ultimately earned more than \$250 million from his involvement. In the end, any expectations that the film would serve as a critique of the evils of unchecked capitalism went the way of the dinosaurs...

# ANATOMY OF A CLASSIC

► RELEASED: 23 December 1954 ► RUNTIME: 120 minutes  
► CERTIFICATE: U ► DIRECTOR: Richard Fleischer  
► WRITERS: Earl Felton (screenplay), Jules Verne (novel) ► STUDIO: Disney

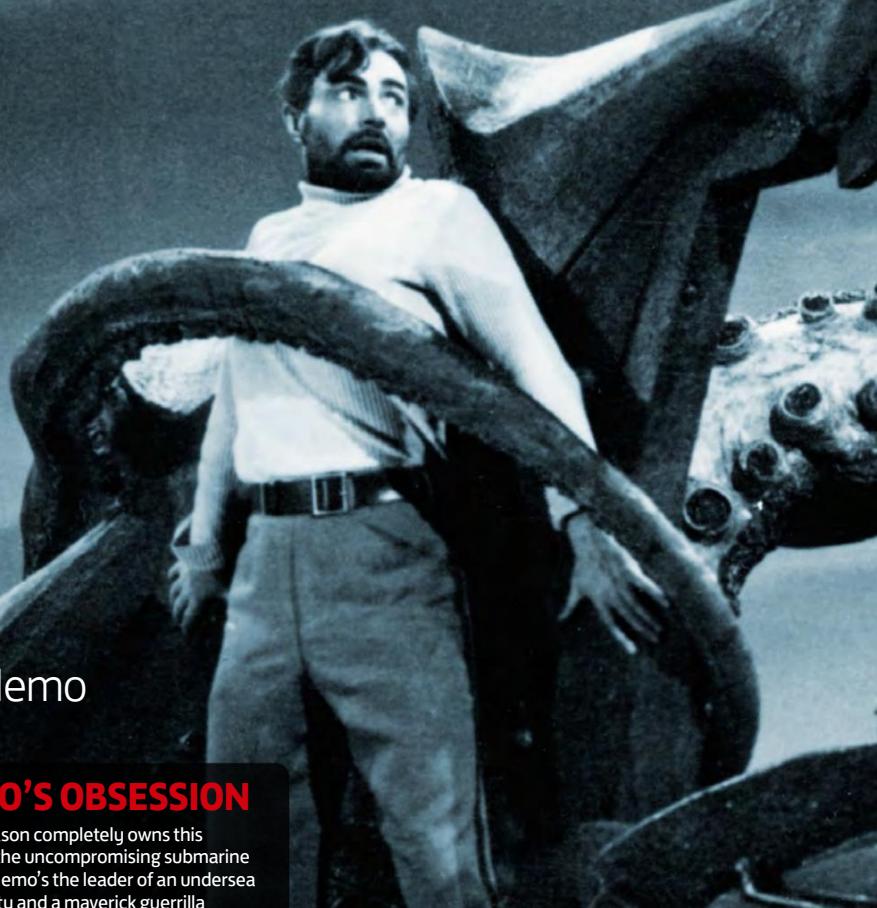
WORDS DAVE BRADLEY

# 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA

When Disney first had a crack at finding Nemo

## CLASSIC DIALOGUE

**Captain Nemo:** "Think of it. On the surface there is hunger and fear. Men still exercise unjust laws. They fight and tear one another to pieces. A few feet beneath the waves their reign ceases. Their evil drowns. Here on the ocean floor is the only independence. Here I am free."



### ABOARD THE NAUTILUS

The Nautilus is arguably the most beautiful set Disney ever built. It's no wonder they preserved it for years as an attraction at Disneyland. Steampunk to its core, it's a streamlined symphony in brass and wood and iron rivets – no matter how Jules Verne described it, this is how we all think the famous submarine should look. Inside and out, like the Millennium Falcon or Serenity subsequently, the Nautilus is itself a character in the story. It's a palace beneath the waves, including a dining room and a humungous pipe organ.

The interiors of the Nautilus were designed by Roland Hill (who also envisaged Sleeping Beauty's Castle at Disneyland) and decorated by Emile Kuri, who won the 1954 Oscar for his work here. The exterior model, designed by Harper Goff, could move through water at 90 knots.



### HOW MANY LEAGUES?



It's a common mistake to think 20,000 leagues refers to distance straight down beneath sea level. That's absurd for two reasons. Firstly, naval officers always measure depth in fathoms, not leagues. Secondly, the sea would be less than three leagues down at its deepest. What Jules Verne was actually describing was the amount of travelling lengthwise the submarine would do once it had submerged. Thus, our heroes go under the sea, and then travel 20,000 leagues around the world (just under three times around the circumference). Jules Verne was obviously fond of this measure of travel, because he called one of his other adventure stories *Eight Hundred Leagues On The Amazon*.

### NEMO'S OBSESSION

James Mason completely owns this movie as the uncompromising submarine captain. Nemo's the leader of an undersea community and a maverick guerrilla chief. Whether his single-minded anti-establishment ways, and the unswerving loyalty of his seamen, make him Che Guevara of the oceans or a sinister cult leader is a matter for debate. His "guests", including Professor Aronnax, choose to see him ultimately as a murderer and a despot but his passion for life beneath the waves renders him mesmerising, and the



narrative has more than a little sympathy for him – we understand his argument that nations trafficking in weapons and slavery are evil, and that the destruction of their ships ultimately saves lives. Supposedly he took to the Nautilus when his wife and child were killed by unnamed powers seeking his scientific knowledge, although in Verne's books he's specifically an Indian escaping the British. Disgusted by 19th century imperialism, Nemo might be the last sane man on Earth.

### DISNEY AND FLEISCHER

Walt Disney considered himself something of a spiritual successor to Verne, in that he brought fantastic tales of wonder to the public. *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea* is the only science fiction movie he produced himself, and for his director he chose Richard Fleischer. It was a bold gamble since Fleischer was the son of Max Fleischer, Disney's biggest rival at the time (they made the Betty Boop, Popeye and Superman cartoons). Adapting the book was their first challenge – most of Verne's work is a tour of ocean science with only about 75 pages of adventure. In true Disney style they contrived comic relief in the form of a sea lion, and gave Ned Land a song (an odd shanty about aquatic-themed romantic conquests).



## THE GIANT SQUID

Workers fighting a giant octopus had been used by French literary legend Victor Hugo in *Toilers Of The Sea* as a metaphor for the people fighting the Industrial Revolution; Jules Verne pointedly borrowed the metaphor but makes it about France's struggle in the 1848 revolution. Although no such reference is implied in the movie, the set-piece attack of the squid remains one of Hollywood's most famous action sequences

(and earned the film an Oscar for special effects). The first attempt to film the model was a disaster, with the mechanical beast prone to failure and obviously fake – Walt Disney rejected the so-called "Sunset Squid Sequence", and a better squid was built with a storm scene whipped up to camouflage any remaining deficiencies. The production team conducted a ton of research into the Colossal and Humboldt squids, although the resulting model ultimately has its white beak on upside-down.

## PETER LORRE

Hungarian-Austrian-American actor Peter Lorre boasted a distinct and creepy voice, and was typecast as a sinister foreigner in many Hollywood films, turning up in *The Maltese Falcon* and *Casablanca* as a petty criminal. More sympathetically, but ultimately siding with Ned Land's attempts to flee the sub, he plays Professor Arronax's assistant Conseil in *20,000 Leagues*, and famously commented to Walt Disney that "the squid got the role usually reserved for me".

## CLASSIC SCENE: THE AQUATIC DINNER



1 Nemo invites his three visitors to join him for dinner, and they commend him on the sumptuous surroundings and amazing food. "I've never tasted better!" claims Arronax.



2 Ned jabs at his food with a knife, and Nemo picks him up on his unsophisticated manners. "There's a fork on your left, Mr. Land!" he snarls. But what is this stuff anyway?



3 "Brisket of blowfish with sea squirt dressing, basted in barnacles," boasts Nemo. The guests feel queasy: everything on the table is a substitute grown in the ocean gardens.

## AN UNDERWATER FUNERAL

There is something inherently creepy about Victorian diving gear, and the film plays up to this. The first time we see the crew of the Nautilus, not only are they all encased in the faceless undersea outfits, but they're also conducting a burial on the seabed. It's like some bizarre, dreamlike ritual taking place in the silence of the deep sea, complete with headstone cross covered in barnacles. "That tall one must be the leader!" cries Arronax from the safety of the ship's observation window, his sense of wonder apparent as he watches a dead body be manoeuvred into the reef.



## KIRK THROWS A PUNCH



The character of harpooner Ned Land, ironic surname and all, was played by movie legend Kirk Douglas. Upon reading the script, Douglas insisted that a scene be added showing him romancing women and brawling with guys, in order

to preserve the Hollywood hunk image he'd been cultivating. So a new Western-style street scene was written for the beginning – Ned is first seen with a glamorous girl on each arm, before getting involved in a fight where he punches a boastful sailor through a window. While he eventually saves Nemo's life, Ned remains a rogue throughout, clearly intent on finding treasure to pinch from the Nautilus and working with Conseil to escape.

## NUCLEAR SUBMARINES

Jules Verne wrote more than one book about submarines (they also feature, rather more prosaically, in *Facing The Flag* for instance). Such things did already exist – in 1863 the French navy were the first to deploy one that didn't need human propulsion. But Verne made many startlingly accurate predictions about their 20th Century advancement, such as their speed



and the threat they posed to major nations' shipping lines. The word Nautilus means "sailor" in Greek and is the name given to a species of mollusc;

the first workable submarine was thus christened by its inventor Robert Fulton in the 1790s, and many military vessels have taken the name since. While the sub in Verne's book uses electricity from seawater batteries, Disney and Fleischer made it explicitly nuclear-powered for its intended Cold War audience. "Captain Nemo had discovered what mankind has always sought," states Arronax. "The veritable dynamic power of the universe. This secret alone gave him mastery of the sea."

THE FLY

WORDS STEVE O'BRIEN

# THE FLY

David Cronberg's extraordinary remake of the '50s monster movie took everyone by surprise...



**B**efore he even made the film there was a certain beautiful inevitability that David Cronenberg would remake *The Fly*.

Nearly 20 years before Tim Burton brought the word “re-imagining” into the cultural lexicon, Cronenberg was doing just that. *The Fly* of 1958 was a pulpy exploitation pic and – really – little more. Cronenberg’s remake shook up the story’s DNA and reassembled it with all of the director’s trademark themes of body horror, sexuality, biology and technology as well as disease, decay and evolution and all in a movie that became his biggest hit to date.

Cronenberg’s cinematic path works like a series of chapters. He was born in Canada in 1943 and as a boy became obsessed with science fiction and fantasy, regularly sending stories into magazines at the time. Though none were ever published, he kept receiving positive letters from editors, encouraging him to keep writing.

While studying English at the University of Toronto, he started making movies, two shorts on 16mm. His first real feature, *Shivers*, was made in 1975 and became one of the fastest-recouping movies in the history of Canadian cinema. This was followed by *Rabid*, then a curiously out-of-character drag racing film named *Fast Company*. But it was 1979’s *The Brood*, starring Oliver Reed, that saw him make confident artistic strides forward. And with *Scanners*, he enjoyed his first real worldwide commercial hit, which claimed the number one spot in North America the week it opened.

A collaboration in 1983 with Stephen King resulted in *The Dead Zone*. This was Cronenberg’s most mainstream and restrained film to date and a movie described by Andy Warhol as the “*Clockwork Orange* of the ‘80s”. It was on the strength of this that producer Mel Brooks (yes, really – that one) approached the Canadian to helm *The Fly* after Brit director Robert Bierman had to leave the project due to the death of a family member. Brooks had been alerted to Cronenberg by Stuart Cornfeld, the

same producer who’d introduced Brooks to David Lynch when he was preparing to make *The Elephant Man*.

### FILMED IN CANADA

Despite *The Fly* being Cronenberg’s first proper Hollywood studio picture, it was again shot in his native Canada. Not just thematically did Cronenberg crave continuity, and so he assembled his usual backstage team, including John Beard as first assistant director and Ron Sanders as editor. With all these cliquey Canadians on board, Cornfeld, as Hollywood producer in residence, found himself culturally severed from the proceedings.

“He’d never known what windscreens wipers were for, because he’d never been out of California,” Cronenberg recalled. “He was certainly fairly paranoid and felt rather isolated

up here in the winter with a bunch of Canadians. I think he realised for the first time that Canadians really are different from Americans.”

There was a script already written, by Charles Edward Pogue, and though some of the film’s most Cronenberg-ian themes were already there, the director set about rewriting Pogue’s draft.

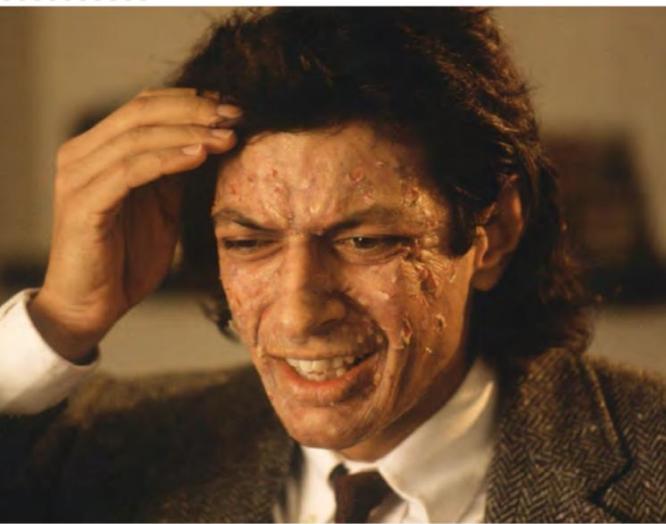
Cronenberg admitted the small details in Pogue’s script – the fingernails falling off, the evolving strength of Seth Brundle after the DNA splice – were great, but the characterisation was “awful”, the dialogue “trite” and the ending “bad”. “There’s one line of dialogue from Chuck [Pogue]’s script that remains, but not one character,” Cronenberg stated. “There was a scientist, and there had been one before, but it’s not the same” **>>**

Transformation complete, the disgusting creature faces the world.



The beast emerges from its pod.





character at all. I never talked to Chuck. I never met him until after the movie was released. He told me how much he'd liked the movie."

Pogue's scientist was a dull but handsome tech-geek, with a wife and child. Cronenberg made his scientist an edgy obsessive and eccentric enough to verbalise what was happening to him. The Writers' Guild of America, however, insisted that despite the total overhaul of Pogue's original script, he would have to be given a scriptwriting credit – before Cronenberg's name to boot.

Cronenberg cast a real-life couple, Jeff Goldblum and Geena Davis, as Seth Brundle and Veronica Quaife. "Jeff is a very particular and eccentric screen presence," said Cronenberg. "I wanted a woman who could match him, and yet be attractive and sexy, as she is."

Brooks was the perfect producer for Cronenberg for his first proper studio picture. Brooks had protected David Lynch on *The Elephant Man*, and never interfered with his director's idiosyncratic vision for the film. It was similar on *The Fly*, where Cronenberg confirms Brooks never leant on him to hold back on the gore or more extreme concepts of the film. "The essence of *The Fly* was to say, 'We're going to do this and show it to you. It's not going to be easy, but if you look at it, it's going to take you some place.'"

#### SUFFERING FOR ART

The make-up for Brundle as he mutates into the creature at the end took five hours in make-up for the ever-tortured Goldblum. The designers studied graphic books on disease as a starting point for their "Brundlefly" make-up/creature designs. Cronenberg was adamant that the creature Brundle turns into shouldn't



Veronica (Geena Davis) can only watch from inside her husband's pod.

be literally a man becoming a fly but instead be a literal fusion of a man and an insect, so the challenge for make-up man Chris Walas was to come up with an entirely new fly-like creature.

The film has a classic narrative thrust as Brundle slowly descends into madness while his body mutates into a creature that has never yet existed. For a low-key film with only three real speaking parts and one main set, the final reel has an element of Grand Guignol about it. But the ending was only one of several different climaxes to the film that were considered. A rejected scene had Veronica giving birth to the now dead Brundle's baby. The audience, having been alerted to expect the worst by the film's earlier nightmare sequence of her giving birth to a giant maggot (delivered in the movie by Cronenberg, in an early cameo), instead see a beautiful butterfly being born. The reason Cronenberg dumped this ending was his belief

that the audience couldn't "switch gears" fast enough after Brundle's eventual death.

"I also had a version where [Veronica] wakes up in bed at the end

with [former lover] Sthathis Borans, because she's married him, and they're having a baby – or dreams she's pregnant. The audience really hated that," said Cronenberg.

*The Fly* was released to enthusiastic reviews and remains one of Cronenberg's biggest financial successes. But it didn't mean that he would find it any easier to finance his own peculiar brand of horror cinema and his next feature, *Dead Ringers*, would prove enormously difficult to get off the ground.

*The Fly*'s success ensured Twentieth Century Fox did a sequel in 1989, but none of the makers of the first film were involved. Starting off with a dodgy Geena Davis lookalike giving birth to her and Brundle's son, it quickly deteriorates into a proud peacock walk of gore pyrotechnics.

In the years since, Cronenberg has continued his study with the body and technology, particularly in 1999's *eXistenZ* and 1996's *Crash*. He enjoyed huge commercial success with *A History Of Violence* in 2005, and his most recent film is the Julianne Moore-starring *Maps To The Stars*.

But in terms of a horror film transcending its gory B-movie roots, it's difficult to beat *The Fly*, quite possibly David Cronenberg's greatest – and most complete – film to date.

**'I had a version where Geena Davis wakes up in bed at the end and she's having a baby. The audience hated it'**

DAVID CRONENBERG

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# THE THING

WORDS LUKE DORMEHL

How come John Carpenter's *The Thing* was a disaster on release but is now recognised as his masterpiece? We investigate

**T**hirty-two years ago this summer, William Parente, film critic for *The Scotsman*, sat down to review *The Thing*, the latest work from gorehound director John Carpenter. Feeling sick to his stomach at what he had witnessed, he wrote a furious review which he hoped would dissuade others from plopping down their hard-earned £1.50 on a cinema ticket to see a film that, he felt, scraped the bottom of the human decency barrel. "The only avenue left to explore would seem to be either concentration camp documentaries or the snuff movie," Parente concluded bitterly. He was, popular re-evaluation would suggest, wrong in his judgment – just as the then-common appraisal of Carpenter as a director with a predilection only for movie blood and guts was also incorrect. Sadly he wasn't alone in his opinion: a lot of film critics were wrong that summer. A month earlier Vincent Canby, influential film critic of *The New York Times*, had dismissed *The Thing* as "instant junk". He was one of the kind ones.

"Science fiction had a major impact on me as a kid," Carpenter tells us. "Huge. I was born in 1948 and I grew up in the '50s, when there was just this gigantic sci-fi monster movie boom."

Although the original *The Thing From Another World* was later deemed "culturally significant" by the United States Library of Congress, its own initial reviews were also fairly dismal. The movie did, however, make an impression on Carpenter; then a young film buff living in Bowling Green, Kentucky. For one thing it was (ghost) directed by Howard Hawks, a personal favourite of Carpenter's. For another it was, in his words, "popcorn-flying scary".

By the early '80s, however, *The Thing From Another World*, though an admittedly entertaining picture, appeared as dated to modern audiences as references to "popcorn-flying scary" in a post-*Exorcist* era of reported heart attacks and fainting in the cinema. Carpenter, off the back of directing the highly successful *Halloween*, was one of the leaders of this new generation of horror filmmakers. "A guy I knew, Stuart Cowen, approached me and said that Universal had the rights to *The Thing*, and he had suggested me as a director," he recalls. "I had mixed feelings about it, to be honest. Simply because the original was one of my favourite films and I loved it dearly. So I

MacReady discovers a ready-frozen Norwegian.



wasn't sure if I should do it. But it would have been my first big studio film, so I tried it."

When he signed on, Carpenter decided to go back to the original source material – the 1938 *Astounding Stories* novella by John W. Campbell (writing under the pen name Don A. Stuart), entitled "Who Goes There?" – much of which had been scrapped in the story's first screen incarnation. "There was one particular passage which I loved dearly, and that was the blood test scene," he says. "The idea that you could put a hot wire on blood and the creature would run from it because it's not human. I hadn't seen that anywhere in a movie up until that point. I thought, well I could do something with that scene! So I jumped in."

#### THINGS GOING BUMP IN THE NIGHT

For a mainstream film, the sombre mood of Carpenter's *The Thing* may have been almost unprecedently bleak, but the real innovation was the creature itself. Michael Myers had been nicknamed "The Shape" in *Halloween*, but that concept was taken to terrifying new heights here, thanks both to the director's own vision, and the nightmarish special make-up effects of then-22-year-old Rob Bottin. "Rob had been the assistant to Rick Baker, and they

had worked together doing *An American Werewolf In London*," Carpenter says. "I had first met him on *The Fog*, and he was a real nice guy; kind of a young fan who wanted to get into the special make-up effects business. He came to me, and he had a concept for 'The Thing' itself. His idea was real simple, but it was completely different from anybody else's – and that was 'The Thing' can look like anything. It doesn't have to look like one creature. It keeps changing all the time."

This invention had been toyed with by the rapid lifecycle of *Alien*'s xenomorph (which grows from a "chestburster" to a full size humanoid in a short space of time) but that was nothing compared to the shape-shifting creature Carpenter put on screen. "There's an old Hollywood mantra that if you're making a movie about a monster you should never show it," Carpenter says. "Which I think is horseshit. The first transformation in the film, which takes place in the kennel with the dog transforming into something; people thought they saw all kinds of things in that creature. People thought they saw just ghastly images. They projected their own horror into it."

Equally impressive was the all-male cast assembled by Carpenter (the only actress in

## 'THE FILM CRITIC OF THE NEW YORK TIMES DISMISSED IT AS "INSTANT JUNK"

entire families, while the latter – certainly if one goes from the reviews – ought to appeal solely to cat stranglers and puppy drowners.

"I mean, just look at the dynamic between the two," Carpenter says of the difference between his apocalyptic film and Spielberg's happier, more commercial vision. "One is kind of a downbeat end of the world story. The other has themes of hope and joy. Which one are you going to see?"

The US box office results spoke for themselves. *The Thing*, produced on a budget of \$15 million scraped its way to a paltry \$19,629,760 in rentals. *E.T.*, on the other hand, despite a production budget of just two thirds that of Carpenter's film, phoned home to the tune of \$792,910,554. Carpenter refers to it as "the second Summer of Love". What does he think of *E.T.* today? "You know, I haven't seen it in so many years," he says, clearly uncomfortable about the subject. "I've only watched parts of it. So I really don't know." Another film trodden underfoot by Spielberg's creature feature, released in the US on the same day as *The Thing*, was a little known sci-fi flick going by the name of *Blade Runner*.

In the aftermath of *The Thing*'s disastrous box office performance, Carpenter was, in his own words, "fired" from his next film. From his point of view there was a lot to second guess. Universal had always been down on the film's ending, which they wanted him to change. "I wasn't so inclined," says Carpenter, although perhaps box office would have been better had he relented, and gone with the novella's clear-cut sense of closure (the creature is destroyed). Or perhaps not.

All John Carpenter could do was shake his head, and ponder how things could have been different. To echo the last line of *The Thing*, in which the film's survivors – stranded miles from civilisation and not entirely trusting each other – give in to fate and share a drink; their future uncertain: "Why don't we just wait here for a little while... see what happens..."

the film is the director's wife, Adrienne Barbeau, who plays an uncredited female computer voice), which features an all-time career best performance from Kurt Russell.

Filming between August and December 1981 – in part in the freezing outdoor conditions of Alaska and Stewart, British Columbia – *The Thing* was a tough shoot. Even buoyed by the relatively big budget backing of Universal ("You didn't have to scrimp and save so much," says Carpenter, who, by this point, was used to working in the indy film trenches. "It was great. It was just great") the production had to navigate some definite challenges. At one point the cameras, which had become so acclimated to shooting in the cold that they had to be left outside, almost froze up completely. Does Carpenter have any favourite stories from filming? "I have a lot," he says with a chuckle. "But most of them should never be printed, for fear of hurting the innocent."

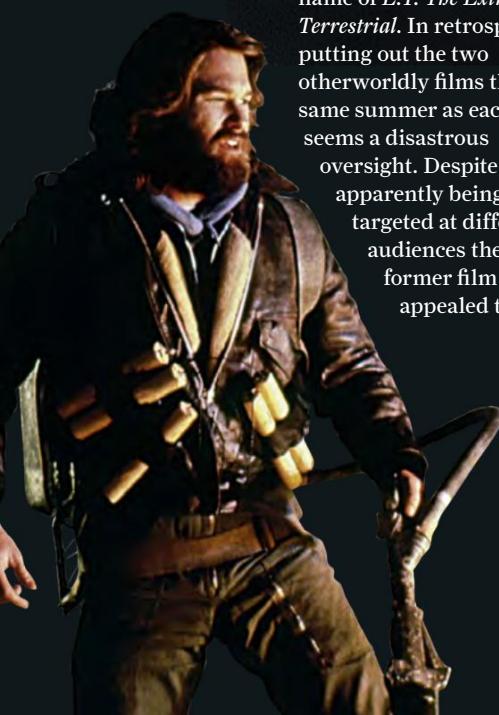
### ALL GOOD THINGS

Today John Carpenter considers *The Thing* to be his masterpiece. "It was a character study of paranoia among these guys," he says. "It expanded my directing abilities... I really liked the film's structure; it kind of has a sombre mood to it. I mean, it's about the end of the world. Although don't tell anybody that." Alas, someone told people that, as the box office reception which met the film's release was nothing short of disastrous.

"I take every failure hard, but this was the one I took the hardest," Carpenter has said. "My career would have been different if *The Thing* had been a big hit." Even the director of the 1951 original *The Thing From Another World* went out of his way to criticise the misfire: "He thought it was too violent, too overt, too explicit. That was the criticism about that movie in general. That I had gone too far."

In terms of competition, *The Thing*'s chief adversary at the cinema proved not to be a heated piece of wire, but a cute alien – also the work of Universal Pictures – going by the

name of *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*. In retrospect, putting out the two otherworldly films the same summer as each other seems a disastrous oversight. Despite apparently being targeted at different audiences the former film appealed to



**GODZILLA**

**GODZILLA**

# The story of how a film about a giant, rampaging lizard became one of the most important in the history of Japan

WORDS ANDREW OSMOND

In the middle of an apocalypse, a man sat in a bomb shelter, telling fairytales to comfort his frightened children. Outside, the city of Tokyo was an inferno past imagining, as waves of American bomber planes pounded the Japanese capital. It was 10 March 1945, during the savage last days of the Pacific War. Around 100,000 men, women and children died, perhaps more. There were similar bombardments on Japan's other major cities, reaching a crescendo in August, when man-made suns over Hiroshima and Nagasaki heralded a dreadful new world.

The teller of fairytales was Eiji Tsuburaya, who was blessed; he and his family survived the inferno. Less than a decade later, Tsuburaya would destroy Tokyo again, this time in miniature, in a blockbuster monster film called *Godzilla*. Yes, *Godzilla* was a blockbuster; for all the Big G's later cheap and cheery image, the first *Godzilla* film was the most expensive Japanese film ever made to that date, with A-list actors and a director who was a close friend of Akira Kurosawa. True, the title character was a man in a monster suit, but that wasn't Tsuburaya's choice. An effects veteran with two decades of experience, Tsuburaya would have loved to have animated *Godzilla* in the way pioneered by *King Kong*'s maestro Willis O'Brien, but there simply wasn't time on the Toho studio's schedule. In any case, *Godzilla* wasn't a personality in the way

Kong had been. Rather, *Godzilla* was a fire-breathing, city-stomping metaphor for the post-Bomb world: the fear, the stupendous destruction, the slow deaths from radiation in Hiroshima and Nagasaki – and not just there.

In 1954, the same year *Godzilla* was released, the American military blasted Bikini Atoll with an H-bomb test. One civilian vessel was too close – a Japanese fishing boat called, with horrid irony, Lucky Dragon. The crew was showered with fall-out, and the radio operator died of leukemia months later. The scandal is openly referenced in *Godzilla*'s first scene, showing a fishing boat on a seemingly peaceful sea; there's a glaring light, a massive explosion, and the boat bursts into flame. Apart from the suggestion of a roar, there's nothing in this opening scene to suggest a monster. Rather, this was real life.

The film's director Ishiro Honda was a documentarian and the assistant director to Akira Kurosawa on the 1949 film *Stray Dog*, a contemporary thriller in bombed-out Tokyo. "Every day I told [Honda] what I wanted and he would go out into the ruins of post-war Tokyo to film it," Kurosawa remembered. "I'm often told that I captured the atmosphere of post-war Japan very well, and if so, I owe a great deal of that success to Honda." In *Godzilla*, Honda takes his subject overwhelmingly seriously, using scenes of spectacular destruction to tell a gripping story

without ever revelling in the carnage. As Steven Spielberg put it, *Godzilla* "was the most masterful of all the dinosaur movies, because it made you believe it was really happening."

## MONSTER MASH-UP

After much trial and error, *Godzilla*'s design combined elements of T-rex and the Iguanodon, three rows of backplates from a Stegosaurus, and alligator-like grey skin. The inside of the latex rubber suit was horribly rough, giving the two sweaty actors alternating as *Godzilla* cuts and scars. The G's marvellously unscientific roar (a lizard roaring?) was created by musician Akira Ifukube, who also wrote *Godzilla*'s relentless trumpeting leitmotif that entangles with the roar in the title credits. Ifukube made the roar by acquiring a double bass, opening it up, rubbing the strings with a coarse leather glove, and playing the result at reduced speed.

Honda downplayed *Godzilla*'s Japanese history and politics, instead stressing its debts to American monster cinema (he even said, "The basic film is American"); *King Kong* was an obvious root; another was *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms* (1953), where a giant reptilian dinosaur, animated by Ray Harryhausen, is woken by nukes and barges into New York. Indeed, *Godzilla*'s working title was *The Giant Monster From 20,000 Leagues Under The Sea*. Honda also >>

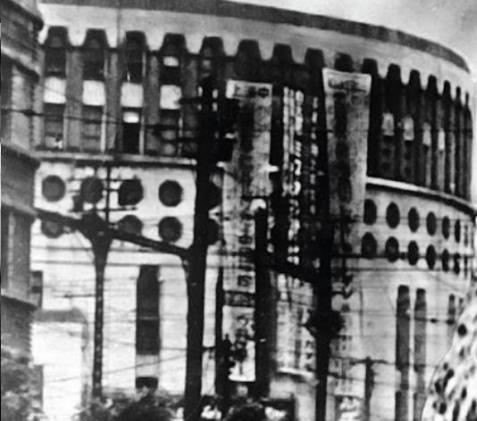


Early test audiences give their reaction...



‘YOU BELIEVE THE CARNAGE IN THE MOVIE IS REALLY HAPPENING, AS IT HAD EFFECTIVELY HAPPENED IN TOKYO NINE YEARS EARLIER’

Godzilla himself has dated more than the miniatures used.



pointed out that some of Godzilla's younger viewers would have only dim memories of the war (though you could equally point out that other cinemagoers in 1954 would remember not just the war but the previous annihilation of Tokyo in the 1923 Great Kanto earthquake).

In any case, *Godzilla* is about far more than just the war. After the ship-sinking overture, the film's early scenes are set on a "primitive" island – not some alien Skull Island, but rather a backwater of Japanese heritage where the loinclothed fishermen remember their nation's

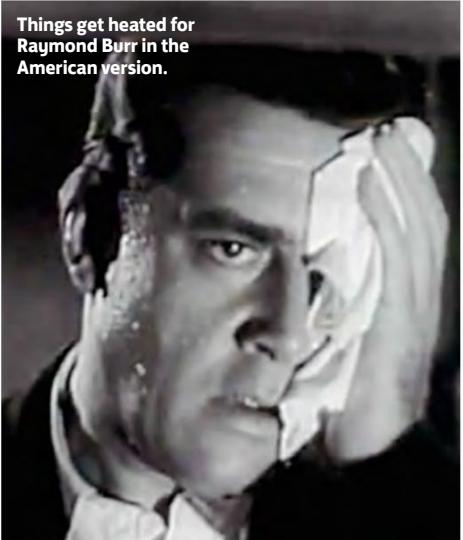
legends and speak fearfully of Godzilla. When the Skull Islanders worshipped King Kong, it was because they were savages. Godzilla, though, might really be a god. He (or, some G-fans argue, she), wields nuclear power, but the script makes clear he's millions of years old. His scaly hide is first glimpsed when he comes to land during an island typhoon, an elemental part of angry nature. In one shot that feels especially pointed, we see the storm destroying a helicopter, representing modern technology. In such ways, *Godzilla* pits prehistory against modernity, much like Hayao Miyazaki's anime fantasy epic *Princess Mononoke*, which features a ghostly Godzilla-like giant.

The island scenes in *Godzilla* climax with the star showing his ugly head; he pokes up from behind a hill (as a matted-in hand-puppet), and the islanders run like the clappers. The action switches to Honshu (the Japanese mainland), with a welter of politically loaded details. A woman commuter on a train reads about Godzilla and exclaims, "Not after what I went through in Nagasaki!" Meanwhile, a woman MP slams down her male rival who wants Godzilla kept secret (women had only recently been admitted to Japan's Parliament). Then there's the fact that *Godzilla*'s plot revolves around a

## THE AMERICAN CUT

Today, *Godzilla* is available subtitled on DVD, while the Americanised edition (*Godzilla: King Of The Monsters*) has slid into obscurity. Ironically, for many decades the US version was the only way to see *Godzilla* in English. The distributor sliced out much of the original footage, filming new scenes with Raymond Burr (*Perry Mason*, *Rear Window*) as an American reporter witnessing Godzilla's attacks. Some Japanese scenes were dubbed, while others were inaccurately "interpreted" for Burr and the audience. Author/filmmaker Donald F. Glut saw the film as a child. "I was really confused. Why were all the people Japanese and why were their mouths moving so weirdly?"

Things get heated for Raymond Burr in the American version.

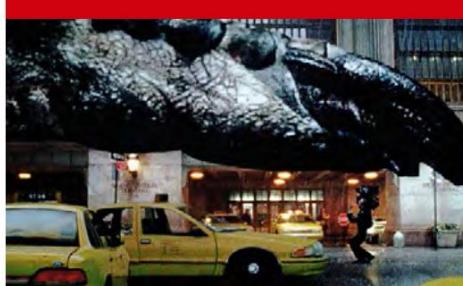




"We apologise for the delay of the 17:46 from Nakano..."



## THE REMAKES



Before anyone mentions the Roland Emmerich *Godzilla* from 1998, Xander made the definitive statement in *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*: Emmerich's monster was "a big dumb lizard that was not the real *Godzilla*". So there. The 2014 *Godzilla*, directed by Gareth Edwards, did reasonable business but got mixed notices. *Total Film*'s Matt Maytum was positive about it, saying it was "that rare breed of blockbuster that emphasises character over spectacle and slow-burn tension over relentless action sequences". *Godzilla* rewards patience with strong performances and sparing, spine-tingling set-pieces."

tortured young scientist, a kind of Japanese answer to Oppenheimer, who has accidentally discovered a new kind of weapon that could destroy Godzilla... or humanity.

Unlike most monster movies, *Godzilla* is as much about the humans as the monster. The script sets up a love triangle between the stricken scientist, Serizawa (played by Akihiko Hirata in an eyepatch), his fiancée Emiko (Momoko Koichi) and her increasingly close male friend Ogata (Akira Takarada). One of the film's most effective scenes doesn't involve Godzilla at all; rather, it has Serizawa giving Emiko a demonstration of his deadly invention in a Frankenstein laboratory. The shrieking violin strings anticipate *Psycho*. We see Emiko scream in horror but we don't see what the invention does until a flashback much later on.

The fourth major human character is an older scientist, Yamane (Emiko's father), who's played by the nationally famed actor Takashi Shimura. The Yamane character is a passionate advocate of learning from Godzilla, rather than destroying him. As Yamane says in yet another of the film's politically charged moments, Godzilla is a creature which has actually survived an atomic blast. Whereas contemporary American monster

films featured silly boffins who got too close to the monsters and were killed, Yamane is treated with total respect. As a figure of moral authority, he's rather like Jon Pertwee's Doctor Who, circa 1970 – even if, like Pertwee's Doctor, he drops the odd scientific clanger, such as his claim that dinosaurs walked the Earth a mere two million years ago!

### ALL-OUT ASSAULT

As with most 60-year-old films, *Godzilla*'s drama occasionally creaks. Ogata and Emiko are somewhat one-dimensional, and even the far more resonant Serizawa has the odd fit of melodramatics. But the sequence that does hold up spectacularly on the big screen, which is where it really needs to be experienced, is Godzilla's all-out assault on Tokyo. Fifties American monsters usually cause small-scale urban mayhem, but Godzilla beats up a whole city. Even here, the monster itself is almost secondary. The intensity of the destruction comes from the fire, the melting pylons, the explosions, the falling rubble. In its cumulative power, the carnage elevates even the most wonky effects to tragic grandeur.

As Spielberg says, you believe it's really

happening, as it had effectively happened in Tokyo nine years earlier. Honda goes still further, showing the aftermath of Godzilla's rampage, with a hospital overflowing with dying people while children wail for their parents. The sight traumatises Emiko, making her betray Serizawa's secret weapon and leading the film towards its inevitable end. But irrespective of the outcome, Yamane notes, in this age there will always be more *Godzillas*.

Twenty-seven more *Godzillas*, in fact, from the hasty sequel *Godzilla Raids Again* a year later, to the fiftieth-anniversary *Godzilla: Final Wars* in 2004. Then there's the whole genre of Japanese kaiju ("monster") movies, *Godzilla*'s spawn, from *Mothra* to *Rodan* to the non-Toho *Gamera*. Not forgetting these films' TV competitors, which were dominated by Tsuburaya's own *Ultraman* franchise from the 1960s. Some of these follow-ups were good, some were fun, some were frightful. None of them, though, had the same shell-shock force as their founder. The first *Godzilla* was no mere monster flick; it was made by people who'd lived through Japan's worst time and made it into a dark and resonant fairytale to shield their children from the fire.

# E.T. CLASSIC SCENE

Elliott and his alien grab some serious air...



The child-like aura of *E.T.* is no accident. It remains Steven Spielberg's most personal movie to date, representing the heartache he felt as a teenager going through his parents' divorce. When *E.T.* arrives, Elliott fills the emotional void of his absent father with a universal bond and, although Spielberg never acknowledged it at the time, 10 years on he admitted he was the boy in need of a friend. It is also shot from a child's perspective: we know the main antagonist as Keys, named after the bunch attached to his hip, which is all we see of him for most of the film; we rarely see an adult face, and it's only when the scientists begin to shatter Elliott and *E.T.*'s world that Spielberg dispenses with the low angles.

In 2011 it was the turn of J.J. Abrams to take a look at aliens through the eyes of a child, with *Super 8*. And while the *Star Wars* director may also be sharing his youth, it's clear that producer Steven Spielberg is also harking back to his boyhood...

## Setting the scene

- *E.T.* was made for just over \$10m and Universal wasn't even happy to risk that much: they put the money up through a bonding company. It became the highest-grossing film of all time, and remained so until Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* in 1993.

- Melissa Mathison wrote the script in eight weeks. Aside from revisions on-set, Spielberg shot Mathison's first draft.

- Unusually, the film was shot in sequence, which Spielberg states was key to the children's engaging performances.

- Carlo Rambaldi, who designed *E.T.*, was inspired by one of his own paintings, "Women Of The Delta".



### FALLEN ANGEL

Drew Barrymore would visit the *E.T.* house many years later – she tumbles into the back garden in a scene from *Charlie's Angels*.

### E.T. WHEELS

Spielberg's team contacted Kuwahara BMXs for the movie, which turned into an exclusive licensing deal and the launch of the *E.T.* Kuwahara. On the 20th Anniversary in 2002 this BMX classic went back into production.

### BOB THE BANDIT

Bob Haro, one of the most famous BMX freestylers of the '80s, is the lead stunt rider in this scene.



"It's a little piece of wonderment. This little guy came into our lives and kind of did his magic. I owe a lot to this creature from another world."

Steven Spielberg, director



"That was the secret to people attaching sentimentality to *E.T.* It was all in the eyes."

Henry Thomas, actor



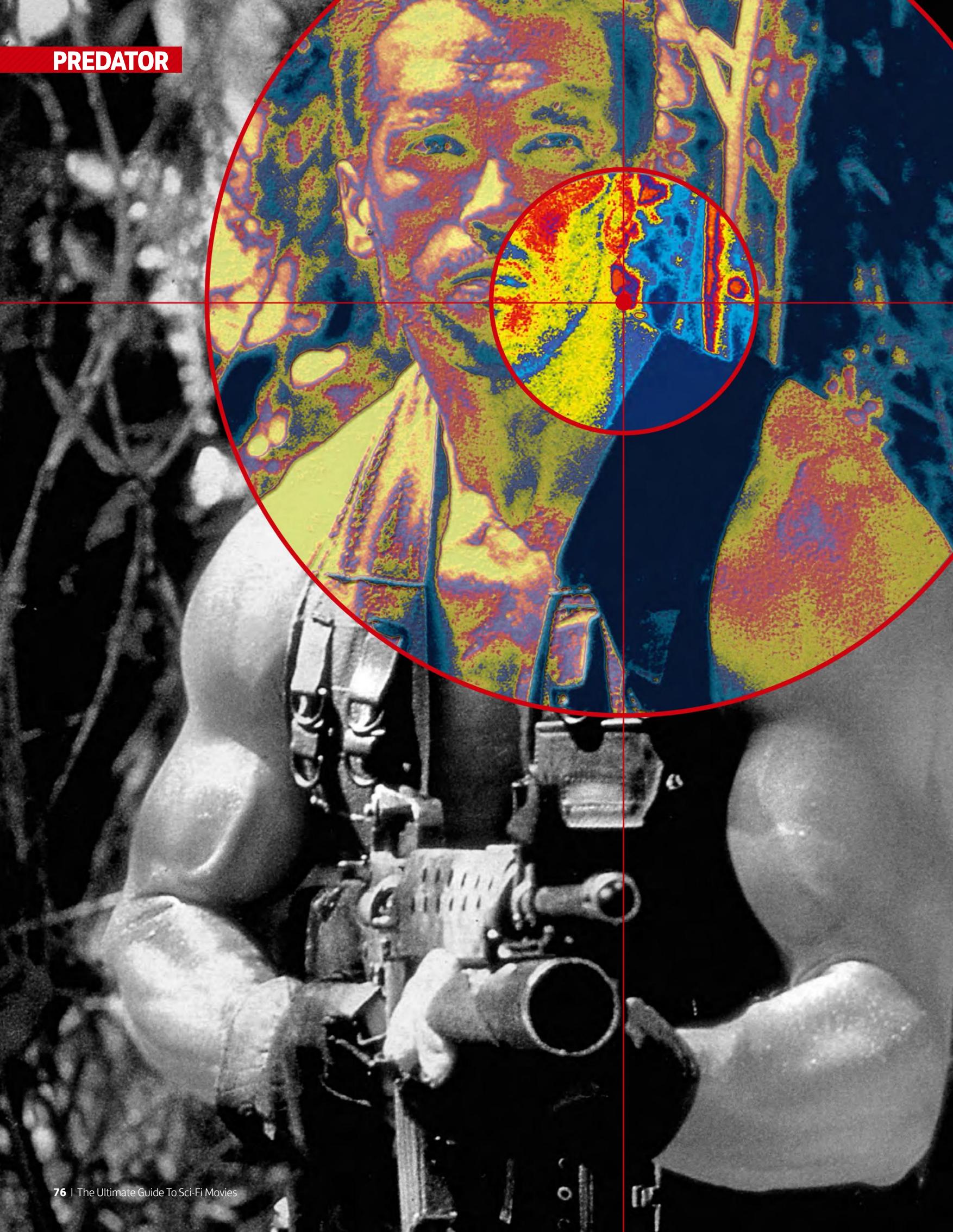
“It's a cliché to say this movie is for the child in all of us. This movie is for the people we are, the people we have been and the people we want to be again.”

**Steven Spielberg, director**

“There's no way to describe how magical it was. Something that alien, that bizarre working with you, it was like working with another actor.”

**Robert MacNaughton, actor**

PREDATOR



# PREDATOR

Conceived on a Californian beach, shot in a Mexican jungle, starring an Austrian bodybuilder: Total Film rewinds to the turbulent making of an '80s action classic...

**1** 1983. Two brothers, Jim and John Thomas, are sitting on a Californian beach, bashing out their debut script. "We'd just stick an umbrella out there and just work," recalls Jim. At the time, living nearby was Ernest Thompson, the playwright who, the previous year, had won an Oscar for his own debut script, *On Golden Pond*. Locked away in his "ivory-tower condominium", every day he'd look down and glimpse these upstarts scribbling away in the sun. "He finally couldn't stand it," laughs Jim. "He came and told us how jealous he was!"

While Thompson envied their makeshift beachside office, it was lucky he didn't glance over their shoulders to read what they'd written: a pulsating script that would launch a franchise and introduce the world to one of the great alien creations. *Predator*, as it eventually became known, was about to have its moment in the sun. "We had an idea about doing a story about a brotherhood of hunters who came from another planet to hunt all kinds of things," says Jim. They swiftly realised it wouldn't work. "So we picked one hunter who was going to hunt the most dangerous species – man."

In this case, the most dangerous man on earth – the combat soldier – armed with the most sophisticated weaponry available. Set in the jungles of Guatemala, *Predator* begins as an elite team of US soldiers are dispatched to find a missing "civilian" chopper crew. At it turns out, the vehicle was on a military sweep for rebel guerrillas, whom the CIA want scorched from existence. While the shooting script made references to the soldiers' past missions in Libya and Afghanistan, the Thomas brothers recall that in an early draft, team leader Dutch recalled an "embassy takeover" he'd once been involved in.

Released in 1987, the same year Oliver Stone's *Platoon* won Best Picture, *Predator* tapped into the right-wing driven craze for military movies, only to bend the genre right out of shape as the team gradually get picked off by the Predator. "The creature was descended from a long line of a warrior society," says John. "Obviously, he wasn't a game hunter. He was in this for trophies. It has the same implications for his kind and his society as it does on our world. We were trying to convey that it had high meaning for him." Indeed, as the creature cleans and strokes the skulls of those it kills, it's clearly more than just sport.

The Thomas brothers decided to create an alien that innately understood how to hunt, lure

and trap. Stalking (using heat-sensitive vision), camouflage (via an invisibility cloak) and mimicking the call of its prey were the order of the day. Conveyed using sound loops and synthesised noises, the creature repeats back what it hears – most poignantly in the finale when Dutch asks, "What the hell are you?" and the Predator utters the same statement, with the emphasis on you. An uncanny use of sound design in the film, it was just one of the many innovations that made *Predator* far more than just *Aliens* in the jungle.

## MYTHOLOGICAL INSPIRATION

Originally called *Hunter*, inspirations ranged from Joseph Conrad's jungle-set classic novella *Heart Of Darkness* to stories by the Brothers Grimm read to Jim and John by their parents when they were young. The brothers also plundered their knowledge of creatures from classical literature. "We've always had an interest in mythology," adds Jim. "There've always been creatures like the Predator. There's the Cyclops, the Minotaur, Goliath, the Grendel in *Beowulf*. They always represent the darkness."

Finished in September 1983, the brothers started to shop the script around Hollywood. But without an agent, they couldn't get it read. So they resorted to slipping it under the door of Twentieth Century Fox employee Michael Levy. With not a credit to his name – he would go on to executive produce *Die Hard 2* and *Predator 2* – he passed it on to his colleagues. Lawrence Gordon, the veteran action producer who was in the midst of his two-year tenure as President of Fox, read the script in early 1984 and snapped it up faster than you could fire an M16.

With Gordon assigning underling John Davis to the project, it was the fledgling producer who was responsible for hiring John McTiernan as director. "We needed a fresh voice," says Davis, who had seen an early cut of McTiernan's debut feature *Nomads*, an evil-spirits tale starring Pierce Brosnan and, er, Adam Ant. "I was very happy when they offered it to me," says McTiernan. "I'd always dreamed of doing an old-fashioned adventure movie, and *Predator* was clearly designed to be pure entertainment."

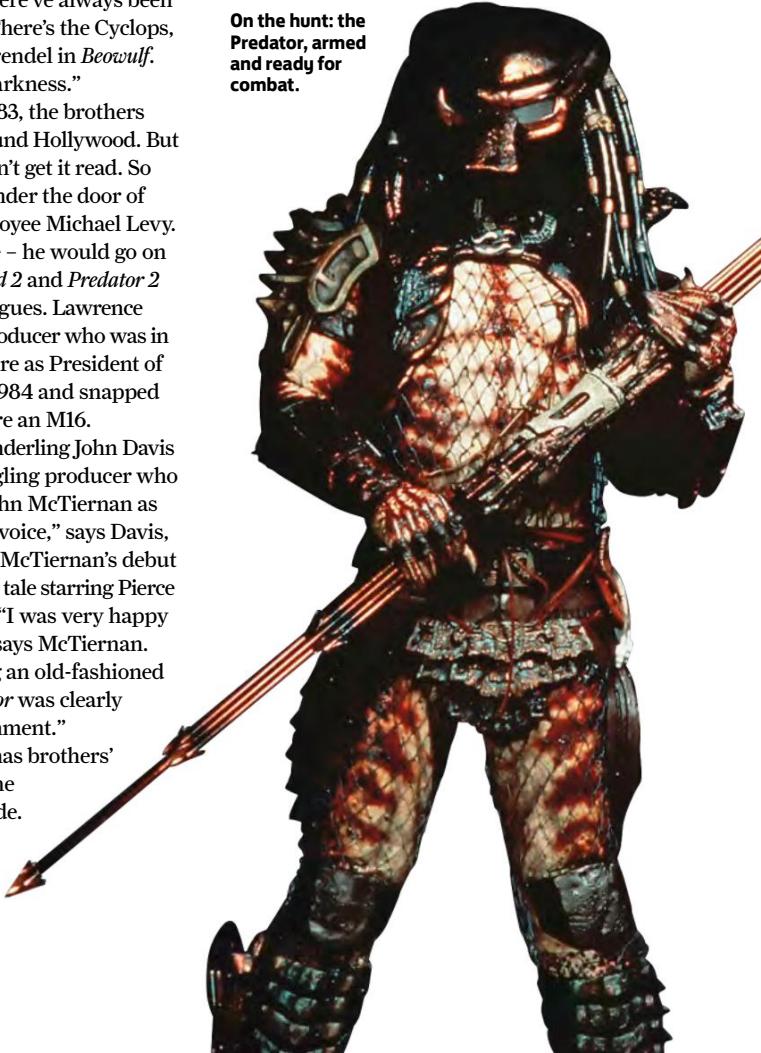
For McTiernan, the Thomas brothers' script contained everything he needed to assemble such a ride. "It combined elements you rarely find together: a

classic hero story and a horror story, like the Norse myths, where heroes fight against supernatural beings," he says. "It also reminded me of the old war movies and comic books with men who were larger than life. It is in essence a battle of the Titans."

Aside from Davis, Gordon made one other major appointment. He brought in Joel Silver, whom Gordon had given his start to on Walter Hill's 1979 thriller *The Warriors*. After working together on two more Hill films, *48 Hrs* and *Streets Of Fire*, Silver had branched out on his own to make *Commando* with a certain Austrian bodybuilder. With previous military experience, having served a year in the Austrian army back in 1965, Arnold Schwarzenegger fell for *Predator* as soon as it was sent to him. The only thing that delayed him – and the shoot, until April 1986 – were a raft of prior commitments.

&gt;&gt;

On the hunt: the Predator, armed and ready for combat.





Team players: (top, left to right) Sonny Landham, Carl Weathers, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Richard Chaves; (above) the Predator reveals itself.

"I always wanted to do a film like *The Wild Bunch* or *The Magnificent Seven*, something like that, where a team of guys work together, rather than relying on yourself," says Schwarzenegger, who was cast as Dutch. "It's much more realistic. But each one of those guys are very powerful guys. They're not only great actors, but they're physically strong and very experienced. They're equals of mine." Symbolised in the film's opening moments when he and co-star Carl Weathers (who plays CIA drone Dillon) engage in a bicep-bulging, dick-measuring handshake, Schwarzenegger recognised this feeling. "It took me back to my bodybuilding days, where you work with a bunch of guys and there is a certain camaraderie that develops."

Weathers, a former pro-football athlete who had risen to fame as rival boxer Apollo Creed in the *Rocky* franchise, was one of the few actors cast without military experience. Given the production was about to dump its cast and crew in the Mexican jungle for three months, casting director Jackie Burch wisely realised that he needed to recruit as many veterans as possible. The first was ex-Navy SEAL Jesse Ventura, a former wrestling pro who went by the nickname "The Body" long before Elle



Macpherson. Making his film debut, he was cast as Blain, "a 250lb killer who chews tobacco".

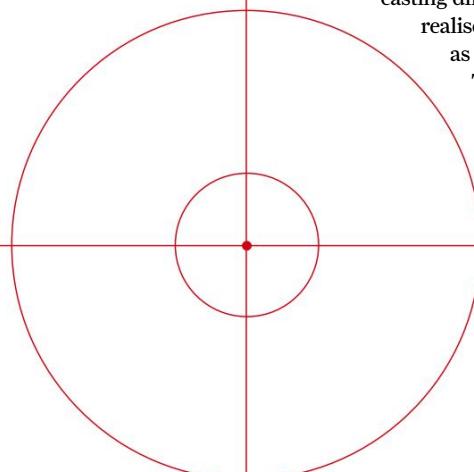
Then there was Richard Chaves, a Vietnam veteran who had served in the 101st US Airborne and was cast as Poncho, the agile point-man of the unit. Reading the script, Chaves was instantly reminded of "the actual jungle experiences I had in Vietnam". William "Sonny" Landham, playing Native American tracker Billy, was the fourth cast member with military experience.

A former adult-movie star, Landham was undeniably the wild card. Hired by Silver, who had worked with him on *48 Hrs* and *The Warriors*, he was such a loose cannon that the insurance company wouldn't even let him on set unless the production hired a bodyguard to escort him. "The bodyguard was not to protect Sonny," laughs McTiernan. "The bodyguard was to protect other people from Sonny! So we had this 6ft, 8in-tall giant, who just had to follow Sonny all day, the entire time he worked on the movie, and make sure that he never misbehaved."

Arguably, he was probably too exhausted to muck around. After six weeks of physical prep in Los Angeles, the actors were brought to Puerto

**'We worked for five or six hours in the jungle, then we went back to the weights room...'**

**ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER**





Cunning plan: a camouflaged Arnie prepares a booby trap.

Vallarta, on Mexico's Pacific Coast, to step up their training. "We'd get up at 6am for breakfast and then run four or five miles to get into condition," recalls Schwarzenegger. "After that we worked five or six hours in the jungle on skills training – everything from climbing trees to rappelling down ropes to handling weapons. We had to learn how to move silently through the jungle and communicate with hand signals. Then we went back to the weights room in the hotel and trained for two hours, and then John called us and said, 'OK, now we rehearse!'"

For a film bursting at the seams with testosterone, two budding directors lay in their midst. The first was Bill Duke – cast as knife-wielding expert Mac – who had already garnered considerable experience shooting episodes of *Falcon Crest*, *Dallas* and *Hill Street Blues*. If Duke's inclusion made total sense – he had, after all, appeared opposite Schwarzenegger in *Commando* – the other was a little stranger. Enter Pittsburgh native Shane Black, still years away from heading behind the camera with *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*. Back then, his debut script, *Lethal Weapon*, was in production, with Silver pulling the strings.

"Joel had asked me, 'Do you want to do a draft of *Predator*? The studio is scrambling and they want to get a different version,'" recalls Black. "I didn't want to but he said, 'Come down to Mexico anyway and we'll put you in the movie.' As Davis remembers, "The idea was hatched, 'We'll hire him as an actor.' And when he's there stuck in Mexico, we'll give him the script and make him rewrite it." In the end, Black was cast as Hawkins, the bespectacled soldier who becomes the first luckless victim of the Predator.

Not exactly built for combat, "it was pretty miserable" he says of the training. McTiernan remembers it differently: "In about four or five days, even Shane started looking like a killer."

#### JOKING AROUND

Black did little to the script, which David Peoples (fresh off *Blade Runner*) had already taken a pass at. His biggest contribution was the two "pussy" gags that Hawkins tells, added to make his character memorable. "It was mostly me sitting with Joel Silver over some tequila telling jokes," says Black. "I think the Thomas brothers, who wrote the script... I really think they hate those jokes. I don't think they like them at all." Other changes to the script were more practical, not least the final face-off between Dutch and the Predator. Originally intended to be in front of the creature's spacecraft (glimpsed briefly in space during the opening credits), it was cut due to time and money.

Yet there were bigger problems to tackle. Just as the film itself is divided into three distinct mini-movies (Act I – the soldiers' successful raid on the guerrilla camp; Act II – the Predator takes down the team; Act III – Dutch and the Predator go mano-a-mano), so the 12-week shoot had allotted four weeks per segment. The final section, when the Predator fully reveals itself, was to be shot last. While the crew were working 19-hour days and shooting in 100-degree heat, back in the US, Richard Edlund, who'd been visual effects supervisor on *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* and *Poltergeist*, was beavering away to create the 7ft costume for the Predator (to be worn by actor Kevin Peter Hall).

Then came the bombshell. One fateful day in May, McTiernan took delivery of Edlund's finished work. As the crate was prised open, his jaw dropped: "I turned to my assistant and said, 'Now we're in trouble!'" According to the film's editor Mark Helfrich, Edlund's design laughably looked like "a giant red lobster". For a film that more than earned its "18" rating, with lashings of gore and gunfire, this just didn't wash. Using the costume, McTiernan shot some test footage – the scene where Hawkins gets disembowelled and dragged into the undergrowth. "I sent it back to the studio and said, 'You don't want to continue with this, do you?'" he recalls. "And they looked at it and said, 'No! Wait! Stop!'"

Two-thirds of the way in, *Predator* was shut down for eight months while McTiernan and co went back to the drawing board, quite literally. *An American Werewolf In London* effects guru Rick Baker was considered, but eventually Stan Winston was hired to (re)create the Predator. Fresh off an Oscar win for his work on James Cameron's *Aliens*, he happened to be sitting next to the director on a plane heading for Japan when he started work on the design. "I was sketching concepts for the Predator. And Jim Cameron looked over to me and said, 'You know, I always wanted to see something with mandibles.'"

Hastily, Winston etched in the moveable pincer-like appendages on the Predator – terrifyingly designed to fold and flare out (prompting Schwarzenegger to utter the film's classic line: "You're one ugly motherf\*cker!"). Wanting to utilise a more naturalistic, humanoid appearance – not least due to the creature's Rastafarian-style dreadlocks – Winston decked his creation in hi-tech armour that even housed a pop-up medical kit and self-destruct detonator. It made for an "unusual look", as FX technician Shane Mahan put it: "The creature is very cultural-looking, a mix between a Spartan and an African warrior."

What makes *Predator* so successful is how gradually McTiernan and the Thomas brothers reveal their creature – from his heat-vision POV to his shimmering invisibility cloak to the sight of him in full body-armour to the final pay-off, where he removes his helmet. Emphasising suspense more than action, it partially explains why the 1990 LA-set sequel *Predator 2* flopped – the surprise element that McTiernan played on was long gone. But when the original was released in the summer of 1987, audiences flocked to see it, with the film grossing \$60m at the box office (twice the sequel's tally, which at \$35m also cost double what *Predator* did to make).

Most critics dismissed it as just another brainless Arnie action movie. "It's arguably one of the emptiest, feeblest, most derivative scripts ever made," sneered the *Los Angeles Times*. Understandable really, with scenes such as "the mowdown", as the crew called it, when Mac unleashes Blain's Gatling gun (the beautifully named Ol' Painless) into the jungle in the vain hope of shooting the Predator. But via comics, video games and spin-off movies like *Alien Vs Predator*, the Thomas brothers' trophy hunter is still very much alive. "We had no idea that the film would be so well remembered," exclaims Black. "You still see *Predator* t-shirts!"

## ROBOCOP

Man of steel: (main) Peter Weller as RoboCop in the movie's classic, airbrushed poster art; (right) Nancy Allen as Officer Anne Lewis.





WORDS BEN WILSON

Brutal tantrums and ludicrous method acting rocked the set of Paul Verhoeven's *RoboCop*. Yet the end result was an instantly iconic sci-fi movie. We interrogate the players (they have 20 seconds to comply)...

## 'DEAD OR ALIVE, YOU'RE COMING WITH ME!'

It's *RoboCop*'s most famous catchphrase, repeatedly intoned by the law-enforcing cyborg in the 1987 Oscar-winning classic by Dutch director Paul Verhoeven. And it's one that was repeated with a knowing wink when José Padilha's remake was released last February. But it also perfectly sums up Verhoeven's hellacious attitude to his cast and crew during the making of the original.

In fact, the then-Hollywood newcomer would drag his minions through so much stress, indecision, bad planning and explosive tantrum-throwing that if *RoboCop* had failed to triumph, Verhoeven would never have been let on a film set again. That's how much damage he wrought during the film's 68-day shoot in Dallas. And yet the signs that this was going to be a tortuous production were there from the very beginning.

It's spring 1985, and from the moment Verhoeven reads the third draft of the *RoboCop* script from Orion, the film's producing and script-developing studio, he hates it. After finishing it on the beach on the Cote D'Azur, and disgusted by the very idea of a police officer being resurrected as a crime-fighting robot by a money-grabbing corporation, he throws on a beach towel and phones the studio to tell them, determinedly, he will *not* do it. But while he frolics in the sea, his wife reads it and later advises he should make it. "And my wife's a clever girl," says the now 76-year-old Verhoeven. "So I thought, hmmm."

Two days later, armed with a Dutch-to-English dictionary to navigate the American terms, Verhoeven sees what his wife is saying. He agrees to move to LA for a year to shoot *RoboCop* for \$13m, but not without asking the then-unknown writers – Columbia Pictures script analyst Ed Neumeier and UCLA Film School grad Michael Miner – to completely restructure their coffee shop-written >>

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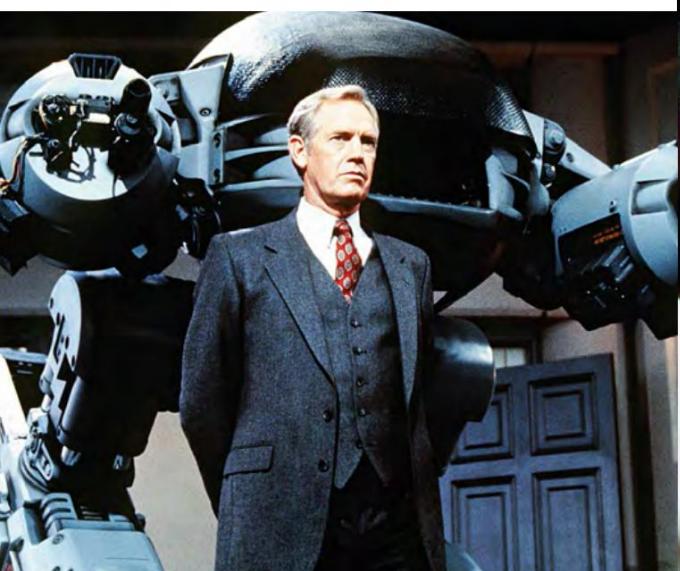
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Brush with the law: (main) Stephan Dupuis applies makeup to Peter Weller; (below left) Ronny Cox presents ED-209; (below right) Weller in full costume; (right) gangmember Paul McCrane suffers a gory fate.

screenplay, bought for \$175,000. Not bad given Neumeier first conceived the idea of a robot cop while working in the art department at Warners, watching night shoots of *Blade Runner*.

## 'YOU BETTER PRAY THAT UNHOLY MONSTER OF YOURS DOESN'T SCREW UP!'

Verhoeven's initial reluctance was the first blunder of many. "It took me two months to realise that we even had to start working on the *RoboCop* costume!" he recalls. "I'd been so busy with scripting and staffing that I'd neglected one of the film's most important things."

In something of a panic, Verhoeven now took his core crew members, the writers and suit designer Rob Bottin (the genius behind the ferocious ET in John Carpenter's *The Thing*) on a wild goose chase over what RoboCop himself should look like, with the director to-ing and fro-ing between whether to make his metal protagonist more akin to the robot in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* or a big, boxy Japanese droid. He finally settled for the former, but at a huge cost to everyone's effort and time.

To add further stress, Orion was pressuring Verhoeven to cast Arnold Schwarzenegger in the lead role. "I said, 'No.' I didn't know Arnold then – this is before we made *Total Recall* together. But Arnold in that suit would have made *RoboCop* too bulky. It would have looked silly."

Instead, Verhoeven cast virtual unknown Peter Weller in the lead role. Why? Simply because he had a good jawline. "It was the right thing to do," maintains Verhoeven. "An actor with a weaker chin would have ruined the whole feel of the movie."

At first Weller wasn't sure he even wanted the role. "When I heard the title, I went, 'hmm,'" he says. "But 18 months before, I'd written a life-



## 'ANGER IS THE ONLY WAY THAT PAUL CAN EXPRESS HIMSELF'

KURTWOOD SMITH, ACTOR

plan of five directors I wanted to work with and Paul was number three, so I said, 'yes'."

Weller would soon question his decision. "Paul was very different from how I thought he would be," he sighs. "He was a megalomaniac, and very demanding." Moreover, two weeks into production, the suit still wasn't ready, meaning Weller had no time to practise walking in it. He'd spent seven months back home in New York perfecting his Robo-stride with celebrated mime artist Moni Yakim. But when the suit finally arrived, its bulkiness prevented him from executing the fluid, snake-like movements he'd envisaged, and production then had to be shut down for a day so Weller could work on a more staccato strut.

The incident left the actor fuming inside the iconic suit. "After that crisis, Peter turned into a very difficult person," says Verhoeven. "But when he then became obstructive, I got pissed off with him."

The animosity with Weller wasn't the only source of Verhoeven's mounting blood pressure. "This being his first big Hollywood movie," says Yakim, "Paul was very tense – he wanted to succeed. And when things didn't go to plan, he got very upset."

Part of this stress was understandable, insists Ronny Cox, whose power-hungry character Dick Jones – OCP's senior president – tries to eradicate RoboCop by unleashing his rival droid ED-209. "At three points during filming, the

studio was contemplating pulling the plug as the money people were losing their faith in the production," he recalls.

Verhoeven was thus forced to go in front of the moneymen and resell his movie based on canned footage he'd shot so far. He succeeded, but now concedes he was terrified. "Science fiction was a big step for me back then," he concedes, admitting he became obsessed with *The Terminator* and watched it 20 times to teach himself to shoot sci-fi with attitude.

## 'YOU HAVE 20 SECONDS TO COMPLY!'

One thing's for sure: Verhoeven, on set, was primed to explode, his inexperience tested by hovering suits and a stroppy lead star. "Paul would yell and scream," nods Kurtwood Smith, who plays Clarence Boddicker, the movie's "Himmler glasses"-wearing, Murphy-slaying crime boss. "He'd especially yell and scream if something wasn't ready on time. Anger is the only way that Paul can express himself." Cox agrees: "Paul is known for his volatile temper. He can be a hard person to work with."

Cox adds that Verhoeven would frequently walk off set to calm down. Yakim, meanwhile, remembers him throwing himself to the ground and screaming. "You're f\*cking with me! We need more firepower, bigger explosions! Where



## CLOSE UP



*RoboCop* is notorious for its level of gore, which led to two versions of the film being released: the one the world saw in 1987, and Paul Verhoeven's "Director's Cut", later released on DVD, which was the original movie he envisaged and shot. The difference between the two versions can be boiled down to three crucial, brutal scenes that the MPAA ratings board made Verhoeven cut before its theatrical release. "They made me re-edit it nine times!" he says.

First up is the early scene where Murphy is executed at close range by Boddicker and his crew. For this, Verhoeven was forced to omit the final shot where Boddicker blows the back of Murphy's head off. Second, in the boardroom fiasco where a junior executive is blasted to bits by ED-209, the director was asked to remove the jets of blood. Lastly, at the finale in the steel mill where RoboCop jams his retractable "fist spike" into Boddicker's throat, Verhoeven was forbidden to include the shot where Boddicker comes to terms with the fact that his throat has just been punctured.

Such heavy censorship from the MPAA still has Verhoeven reeling many years on. "By making me remove all that stylised gore, all they did was make the movie seem more realistic, and therefore more violent. It was meant to feel like a comic book. So I had the junior executive and Boddicker intentionally bleeding fountains of blood. But by making me tone it down, they made the bloodshed feel worse!"

is it? You're killing me!" he quotes. "If *RoboCop* hadn't been the success it was, Paul would have been ostracised from Hollywood for the way he behaved, without a doubt."

At one point, says Nancy Allen, who plays Murphy's partner, he even accused the crew of conspiring against him. "During one scene the actors had to get wired up because we couldn't boom mic it. And Paul went crazy, screaming, 'Why aren't we shooting? Why are you people trying to destroy my movie?' Another time, he sat on the floor with his legs crossed, sulking."

Things didn't get easier, either. Playing the ambitious exec heading the *RoboCop* project, actor Miguel Ferrer recalls how Weller began to insist everyone talk to him as if he really *were* RoboCop. Ferrer found it amusing; Verhoeven most certainly did not. "It was too over the top!" he says, voice rising. Adds Smith: "It was like 'Hi RoboCop' when all you're trying to do is ask him to move away from the toaster so you can make a bagel. So everyone began avoiding him."

The act of getting Weller into the *RoboCop* suit further isolated him, says Allen. "It took about 10 hours to screw Peter into that outfit every day." Make-up was no breeze, either, with Weller spending eight hours every morning in the make-up chair, arriving on set for 2.30am, so he'd be wearing his full war paint and Robo gladrags when the rest of the cast rolled in mid-morning. And by that point, in

the boiling Dallas heat, even the cast and crew wearing just t-shirts and shorts were feeling distinctly uncomfortable.

Thankfully, by this stage, Verhoeven's temperament had begun to mellow. "When my editor showed me some of the scenes we'd filmed, I was flabbergasted. It had taken me a long time to believe in myself on the set of *RoboCop*. Now I couldn't believe I had made this film. I was going, 'Did I do that? Did I make this scene this well, with this level of activity and playfulness?'"

## 'I'D BUY THAT FOR A DOLLAR!'

From the moment Orion screened the final cut, audiences loved it. "We showed it for the first time in New York, and it was the most spine-tingling experience of my life," says Verhoeven, whose movie would go on to be nominated for two Oscars, for Editing and Sound Effects, and to win both. "When RoboCop is asked, 'What's your name, son?' the entire audience shouted out together, 'MURPHY!' It was amazing."

So amazing that Verhoeven, who watched the movie at a 25th anniversary reunion in Dallas in 2012, reckoned he wouldn't change a frame. "I still don't see how I could make it any better – even though they've decided to remake it anyway."

It's this sense of stomping all over their hard work and suffering during the making

of the original that sticks in the craw of the majority of the cast and crew. Neumeier says he wrote to new *RoboCop* director José Padilha to wish him luck, but didn't hear anything back, and Weller warned, "I hope the new director has really pulled his boots up on this – because the original was special!"

Allen isn't quite so philosophical. She feels that a remake is an affront, citing the anniversary screening the cast attended in Dallas. The moment the organisers showed a pre-roll video of new director Padilha discussing how much he loved their version, her heart sank: "It felt like he was saying: 'Happy birthday. By the way, you're being replaced!'" she says.

Verhoeven agrees and becomes downbeat. "I don't see how it can be done better anyway," he says. "It makes me feel very melancholic."

Still, at least many of the cast and crew members have been honoured by the news that fans of the original have pitched together to raise funds for a *RoboCop* statue to be erected in Detroit. "I'd love to attend the unveiling, if they were to invite me," laughs Verhoeven. "I'm living in Europe again now so it'd be a big trip for me, but I'd certainly go."

"So would I," adds Smith, "hopefully along with Peter. And in keeping with my character, I could graffiti it with a spray can!" Then he pauses and adds, respectfully, "But I also understand why Detroit wants to erect a statue in its honour." Nice shooting, son.

INDEPENDENCE DAY



WORDS CALUM WADDELL

# INDEPENDENCE

It may have redefined the scale of sci-fi cinema for a new generation, but 1996's alien invasion blockbuster was initially considered to be a lukewarm box office prospect...



**S**top us if you've heard this one before: otherworldly invaders come to Earth and summarily slaughter its inhabitants, but thanks to the efforts of some ambitiously resilient Americans, the aggressive aliens are ousted and harmony is, ultimately, restored. Indeed, on paper 1996's blockbuster hit *Independence Day* may as well have been called *War Of The Worlds Part II*. Yet, when the Roland Emmerich-helmed fantasy romp rolled around, the big screen had been decidedly lacking in any super-sized sci-fi shocks. Oh sure, *Independence Day* may not have been anything original in the eyes of the more seasoned genre buff but, given that 1995's biggest hits included *Apollo 13*, *Braveheart* and *Die Hard With A Vengeance* is it any wonder that audiences lined up around the block to see some space-nasties destroy the White House?

Yet, despite going on to be the biggest grossing movie of the year, *Independence Day* was considered to be a very risky investment by its studio, Twentieth Century Fox. So much so, in fact, that the extra-terrestrial epic was only given the green light after Emmerich, and writer-producer Dean Devlin, proposed to drastically cut costs.

"We were under severe budget constraints with that movie," begins Douglas Smith, the visual effects wizard who would go on to win an Oscar for his work on *Independence Day* and whose CV includes *Star Wars* (1977), *LifeForce* (1985) and *True Lies* (1994). "What happened is that Roland promised he could get the film done for a price which didn't frighten away the studio.

I think it was about \$60 million, which meant that this was not going to be the most expensive feature ever made. Of course, that sounds like a lot of money, and it is, but in comparison to other major summer movies – and considering what needed to be done – it was really not enough. For instance, they were planning to do all of these extensive visual effects but it had to be cost effective."

The question is, then, why Emmerich – then scaling the heights of Hollywood after the success of 1994's *Stargate* – was so willing to instigate *Independence Day* on a less-than-stellar cash flow...

"The answer to that is simple," admits Smith. "Basically, by agreeing to stick to that budget the studio allowed him to have some independence of his own, if you will pardon the pun [laughs]. So we were moving ahead even though, internally, the numbers were just not working out. In short – what we were *supposed* to spend, and what we *were* spending, was not the same thing."

Consequently, Smith found himself diving headfirst into a project which he now considers to be the most challenging of his entire career.

#### LIKE STAR WARS

"The movie was a very difficult experience for me," he reflects. "It turned out to be one of the most successful projects that I worked on – right up there with the original *Star Wars* – but it was also one of the most difficult. To give you an idea: it was about midway through the shoot when the first visual effect shot got put together and edited. I was sitting there

watching it and thinking, 'Oh no, this is just *not* working out.' It was so bad that I was saying to myself, 'I have to show my friends this' [laughs]. It was embarrassing, you know? So I was concerned about whether or not *Independence Day* was going to work as sheer spectacle or not."

Thankfully, Emmerich eventually found a way to find some further support from Fox and some fresh financing soon resulted.

"What happened is that we compiled a showreel," Smith tells us. "That was what really cemented the confidence of the studio. I am not sure what the final budget tally of the movie was but I don't think they had to spend all that much more. We also screened the showreel to some exhibitors and it was very well received. If I recall, they alluded to

*Jurassic Park* and thought this could be just as big. I remember that Roland came back and said there were now huge expectations for the movie. After that it was a case of 'Just shoot and do whatever you need to do to make it work out.' So we made up some new storyboards, and this was only four weeks before the release of the film [laughs]. >>

Will Smith and Jeff Goldblum ready to save the world.

>>

# INDEPENDENCE DAY



It was that tight to get everything right. It was a really crazy experience and it wore me out. As the guy in the middle of it, it was never clear that this movie was going to come out as well as it did."

Of course, at the box office, where Hollywood pays most of its attention, *Independence Day* came out very well indeed. In its opening American weekend the feature awed enough audiences to seize over \$50 million in theatres. Given that the stars of the film were Will Smith (then still a relatively unproven and unfamiliar leading man), Jeff Goldblum, Bill Pullman and Randy Quaid, it's safe to say that this fiscal phenomenon had more to do with the onscreen special effects – and that ominous poster image of the White House being destroyed – than any particular thespian-appeal.

"That might be true to an extent but there are a lot of special effects movies that cannot sustain themselves emotionally," admits Smith. "However, *Independence Day* manages to do that. You become involved with these characters and you really care about them. But, whatever the reasons were, I was over the moon when people flocked to see it. I got an Oscar out of it too which is nothing to complain about [laughs]. Sometimes you sweat blood over a film and it fails financially, or it is dreadful and you just do not want it on your resumé, but thankfully that was not the case here."

## TOP OF THE CHARTS

Yet, despite breaking box-office records (including the largest opening week gross in US cinema history), Smith had little opportunity to enjoy his success.

"That film taught me everything when it came to learning about my body's ability to deal with stress," he laughs. "So when it was finally finished I was happy to kick back and relax for a little bit. There was a big buzz about *Independence Day* but it was not until I went to a showing at the end of the opening week that I really had the chance to enjoy what we had created. It was a packed screening with a rowdy college crowd and they were ready for

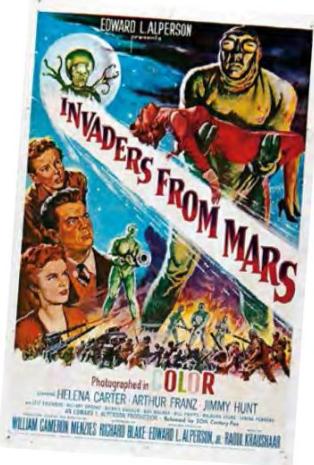
**'I FOUND THE CRITICISM THAT THE MOVIE CAME UNDER REALLY UNFAIR'**

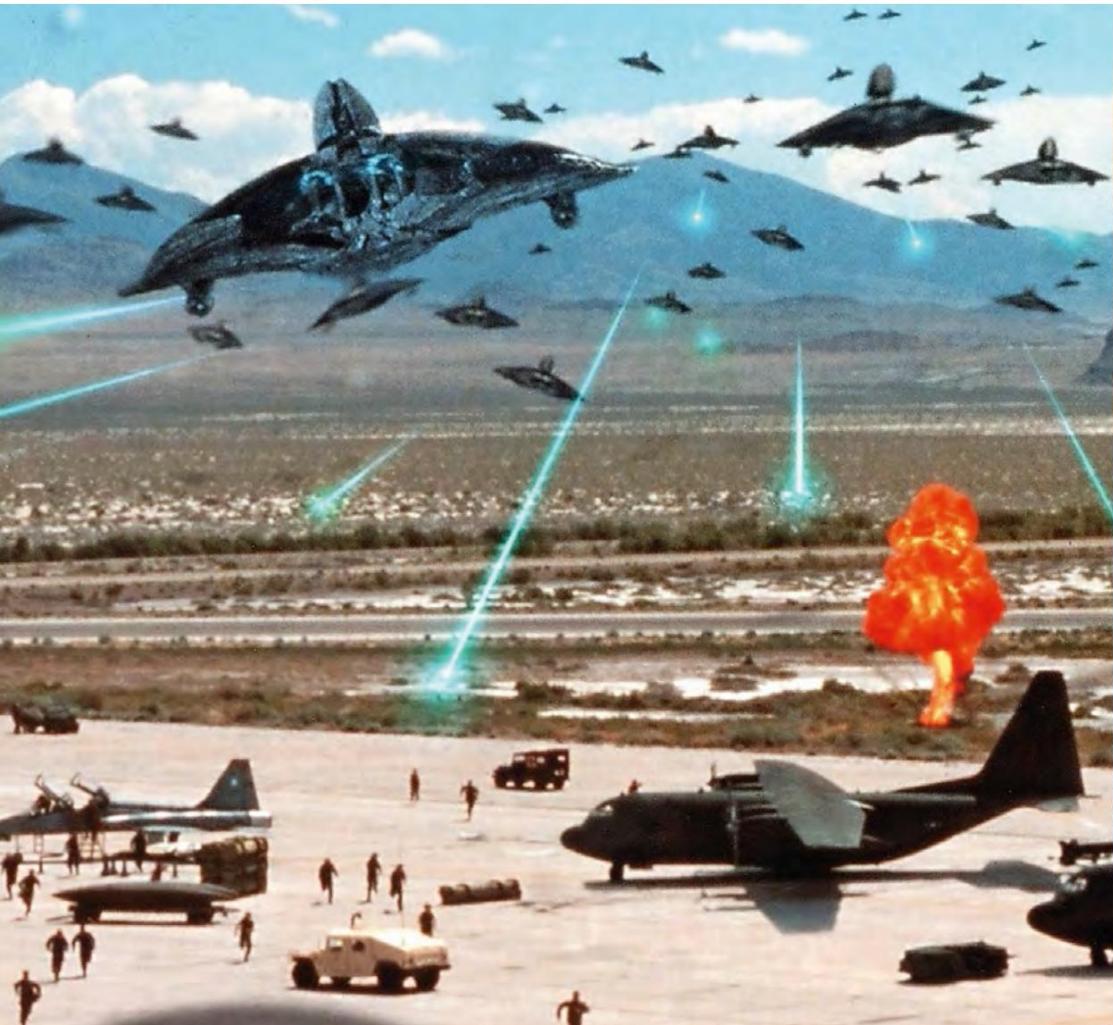
this movie. It was totally wild and whenever something crazy would happen I could not hear myself think for about five minutes afterwards because of the cheers. So it was great to be a part of that. Unfortunately, it was also detrimental to me judging the movie itself [laughs]. When I worked on *Star Wars* someone from ILM came by and let us all know about the box-office records which were being shattered – but with *Independence Day* I just read about it in the paper. I think everyone was just happy to have it done, and out there, in the end."

Unfortunately, the critical reception to *Independence Day* was less than stellar. Sure, several stateside viewers applauded the sight of jingoistic Americans taking the fight to some destructive extraterrestrial terrors, but many reviewers were less than kind. The BBC, for instance, noted the film's closing, feel-good celebration of United States heroism as being "jaw-droppingly pompous" while a critic at the *San Francisco Chronicle* singled out Smith's special effects as one of the few things of merit in what was labelled "derivative" and "cynical".

## EVIL ALIENS

*Independence Day* follows in the wake of a long legacy of interplanetary intruders which includes *The Thing From Another World* (1951), *The War Of The Worlds* (1953) and *Invaders From Mars* (1953). Even with the presence of John Carpenter's *The Thing* (1982), Tobe Hooper's big-budget rehash of *Invaders From Mars* (1986) and the knowing silliness of cult favourite *Killer Klowns From Outer Space* (1987) the actuality of other-planetary evil had been – pre-*Independence Day* – largely confined to small areas and a minimal cast of actors. After Emmerich introduced the obliteration of Earth on an excessive, awe-inspiring scale, however, the floodgates were opened – as evidenced by the special effects-heavy hokum of Spielberg's 2005 *War Of The Worlds* update and the more recent *Cowboys & Aliens* (2011).





"I found the criticism that the movie came under, and which it still gets, really unfair," affirms Smith in response. "Roland is a great filmmaker with a clear vision. He had ideas for what every last thing should look like – including that big spaceship – and just look at his casting; he was smart enough to see that Will Smith was going to be the next big thing. I think the movie walks a very thin line between farce and success and the reason it never slips is down to his actors. They really knew how to play *Independence Day*. But above everything else, it's just a very entertaining film. I heard a radio commentator the other day speaking

about it and he said that when *Independence Day* came out he was hard on it but – looking back on it now – it's actually a lot of fun. I don't think the same thing can be said about a lot of the other blockbusters from that era. But *Independence Day* is standing the test of time and that is attributable to Dean and Roland and their gift as storytellers."

#### BELATED FOLLOW-UP

Almost two decades later, *Independence Day* is threatening to spawn a series of its own, with Emmerich and Devlin now on record as intending to begin production on a sequel.

Questioned about this Smith says that he would be willing to jump onboard for another alien ass-kicking adventure...

"I am not surprised that the second film has taken so long to get going," he states. "When we finished *Independence Day* I recall Roland telling us, 'I want lots of destruction in this movie so that there is no chance of a follow-up movie' – which makes me laugh now. Of course, even after all of the money that *Independence Day* took at the theatres, Roland did not want to do a part two unless there was a really good story. Now, I believe that they have that, and that is probably why they are moving forward. So, yes, I have been hearing about it but I don't know where it stands. *Independence Day* took up a year of my life but it was also extremely rewarding so, if I was asked, there is no question that I would love to do the sequel."

Certainly, in this post-9/11 world, the sight of major American landmarks being lacerated may cause understandable distress to indigenous audiences. On the other hand, perhaps some alien-escapism is just the sort of fantasy-formula that will capture an all-new austerity-generation audience. The answer, as the old saying goes, is in the stars...

#### INTERNATIONAL TREASURE

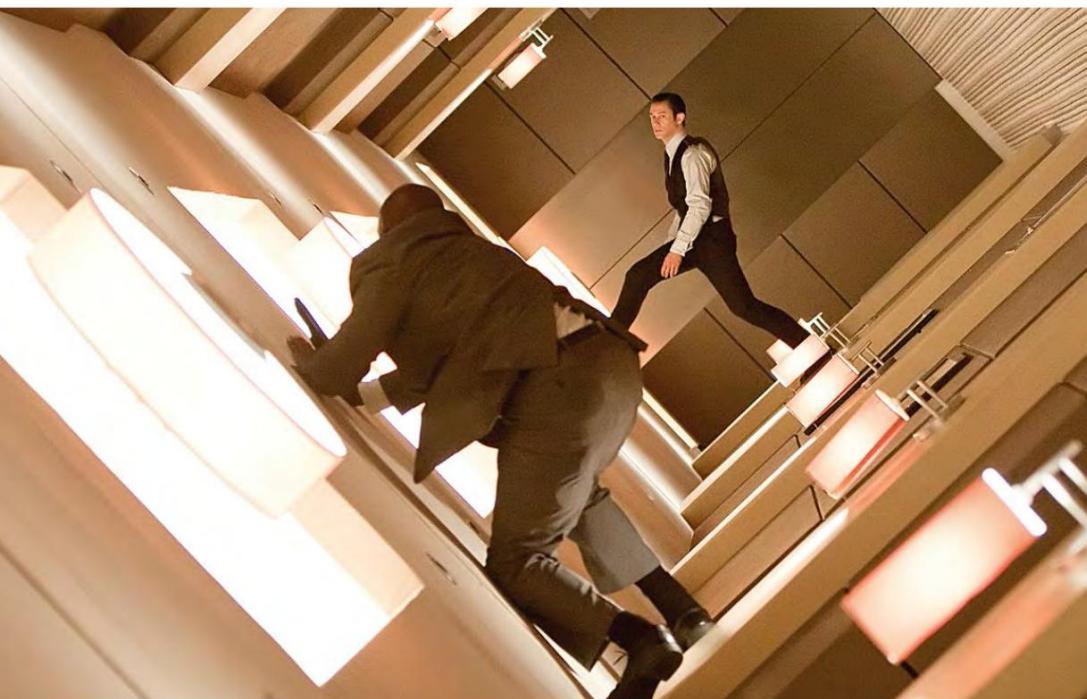
According to visual effects supremo Douglas Smith, helmsman Emmerich insisted on an international flavour to his visual effects crew – something that added a team atmosphere. "Roland is from Germany, of course, so he wanted to give some people from his own country a break, which I thought was great. The German crew was less experienced but Roland hoped that the combination of this fresh new team – and Hollywood veterans like me – would help really take things up a notch. The German crew was interested in doing some miniature effects stuff – as well as getting experience with digital effects – so it was a mission of discovery for them and we ended up mentoring some of them. I think that it is down to the combined effort of a lot of people that *Independence Day* came out so well."



# INCEPTION

## CLASSIC SCENE

Christopher Nolan turns the world on its head...



**A**ll we are and all we seem is but a dream within a dream," wrote Edgar Allan Poe, but it could have come from Christopher Nolan's multilayered metaphysical heist flick. "Extractors" Cobb (Leonardo DiCaprio), Arthur (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) and team steal secrets from people by "stinging" their subconscious minds in a specially constructed dreamworld. Given Nolan's love of cinema, the backdrop is drawn straight from the movies. The centrepiece of the story sees JG-L grappling with a goon on the floor, walls and ceiling of a slick, *Shining*-style hotel corridor as gravity drops to zero around them. It's a pinch-yourself piece of filmmaking, calling to mind everything from *The Matrix* to Fred Astaire, and for 15 stunning seconds it underlines how anything the human mind can conceive is possible, whether onscreen or in dreams. "It's the chance to build cathedrals, entire cities, things that never existed. Things that couldn't exist..." says Cobb of the appeal of creation. Nolan would surely agree.

### Setting the scene

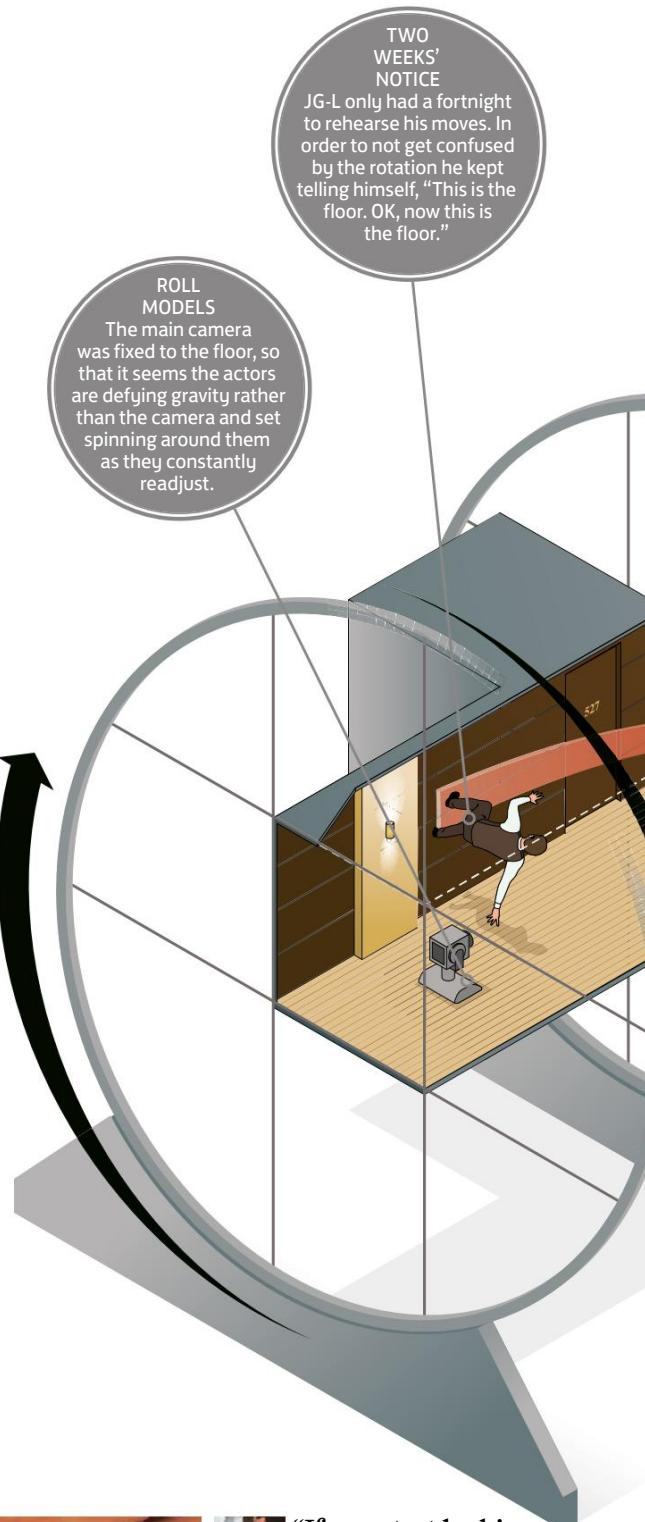
- Influenced by alt-reality flicks of the '90s (*Dark City*, *The Matrix*), Nolan pitched the idea to Warner Bros before making his *Batman* films, but took 10 years to perfect the script.
- He drew from dream experiences such as the feeling of falling, which became "the kick", and the way outside stimuli are incorporated into our slumbers – like waves crashing through Saito (Ken Watanabe's) HQ.
- DiCaprio's team mimics a film unit; he's the director, Arthur's the producer, Saito's the studio, Eames (Tom Hardy) is the actor, Ariadne's (Ellen Page) the production designer and Fischer (Cillian Murphy) is the intended audience.



**“If you lock the camera on the ground, the audience just sees us moving all over the place. It looks like we’re jumping on the ceiling.”**  
Joseph Gordon-Levitt, actor



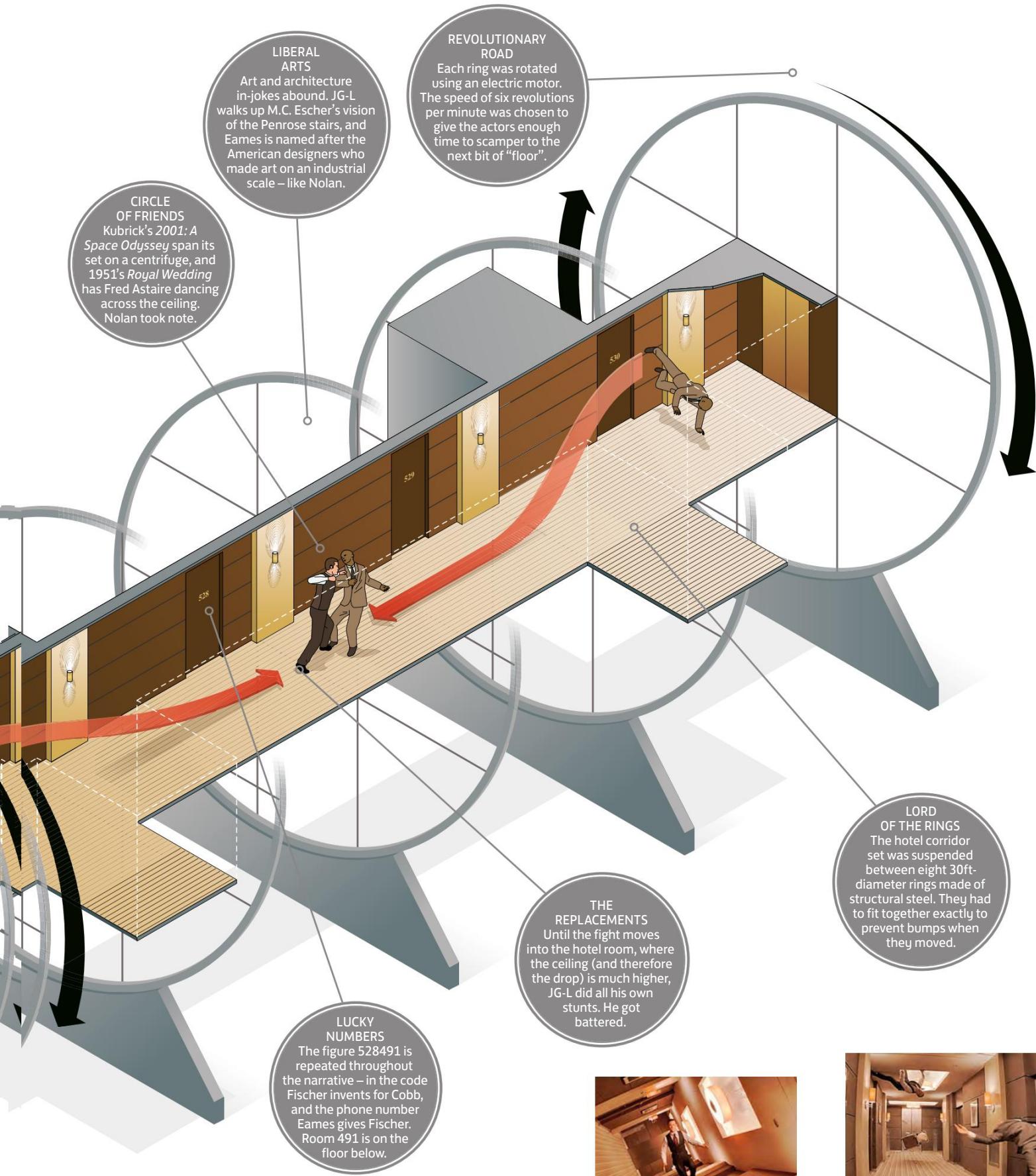
**“If you start looking outside, you get motion sickness... It was not easy and Joe far exceeded what [I] did.”**  
Tom Struthers, stunt coordinator



**TWO WEEKS' NOTICE**  
JG-L only had a fortnight to rehearse his moves. In order to not get confused by the rotation he kept telling himself, "This is the floor. OK, now this is the floor."

### ROLL MODELS

The main camera was fixed to the floor, so that it seems the actors are defying gravity rather than the camera and set spinning around them as they constantly readjust.



**“We elected to play it in one shot, because our immediate response when you first see the footage is it just doesn’t look possible.”**

Lee Smith, editor



**“Joe attacked it with such excitement and enthusiasm. He was determined to do it all himself, and it really, really pays off.”**

Emma Thomas, producer



**“It was like some incredible torture device; we thrashed Joseph for weeks, but in the end it looks unlike anything any of us has seen before [on film].”**

Christopher Nolan, writer/director





# STARSHIP TROOPERS

WORDS JAMIE RUSSELL

Giant bugs! Spaceships! Fascism! Is *Starship Troopers* the most subversive science fiction movie ever made? Paul Verhoeven and co tell us about making a movie with the Reich stuff

**P**icture this: Aryan men with angular features stand to attention in regimental formation. “We are the Reich’s young manhood!” shouts one, staring into the middle distance with brainwashed fervour. Militaristic music plays as Adolf Hitler addresses the crowd from a podium. “Just as you serve this Germany proudly,” he thunders to the assembled young men, “all of Germany today will see its sons marching in you with proud joy.” On screen, a flag with a swastika flaps in the breeze.

Now picture this: handsome young soldiers stand to attention in regimental formation. “I’m doing my part,” shouts a black girl straight to camera. “I’m doing my part,” says a white college jock. Militaristic music plays on the soundtrack as a voiceover tells us: “Join the Mobile Infantry and save the world.” On screen, a flag with what looks like a robotic eagle flaps in the breeze.

The first clip comes straight out of Leni Riefenstahl’s propaganda documentary *Triumph Of The Will* (1935), shot at the Nazi Party’s Nuremberg Rally in 1934. The second is from Paul Verhoeven’s \$100m sci-fi war movie *Starship Troopers*, made in 1997. A lot of things separate these two sequences:

‘We got this movie made because no one in Hollywood paid any attention’

PAUL VERHOEVEN

60 years, the skin-colour of the soldiers, a large dose of postmodern irony and thousands of intergalactic killer bugs. Yet Verhoeven’s echo is outrageously subversive. No one Sieg Heils, no one waves a swastika flag, but the unease remains – the promo video of these good-looking, space-faring All-American teens could have been dreamt up by a futuristic Goebbels. Would you like to know more?

## ON THE BOUNCE

Bland, boring, safe. These are not adjectives you use to describe a film by Verhoeven. The Dutch director makes movies that end with a question mark. *RoboCop*: satire of tabloid news or a Republican wet dream of mechanised law enforcement? *Basic Instinct*: male fantasy exploitation flick or feminist statement? *Showgirls*: exposé of the sex industry or wanton wank flick? There is no correct answer; they’re both at once. “One of the brilliant things that Paul does,” screenwriter Ed Neumeier tells us, “is go, ‘OK, how can I turn this into the extreme statement I want to make?’”

Glance at Robert A. Heinlein’s Hugo Award-winning 1959 novel *Starship Troopers* and you’d think it was just another boys’ toys sci-fi fantasy. In the 25th Century, human infantry units armed with *Iron Man*-style power suits fight an interplanetary battle against intelligent, spider-like

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# STARSHIP TROOPERS

"arachnids" from the planet Klendathu. Yet the slim, fast-paced novel is notable for its fantasy of militarism, right-wing politics and grunt hero Johnny Rico who endures basic training and rises through the ranks of the Mobile Infantry crying, "Come on you apes, do you want to live forever?" It couldn't be more Conservative if it arrived wearing the Stars and Bars, whistling Dixie.

Verhoeven binned the novel before he finished reading it. The Dutch filmmaker grew up during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands and wasn't about to pander to Heinlein's neo-fascist naivety. Instead, he and screenwriter Neumeier and producer Jon Davidson (both collaborators on *RoboCop*) turned the book on its head. Most literary adaptations are passion projects; this was a *hate* project. "We thought the novel was unacceptable," laughs Verhoeven from his home in LA. "Heinlein was a promoter of this kind of neo-fascist view and we were being critical of that." Yet at the same time, the filmmaker wanted to show just how seductive such fascist imagery could be. "I'm a big admirer of Leni Riefenstahl. In her films, Nazism looks glamorous and wonderful – yet the reality is it ends with 50m people dead."

## GOOSESTEPPING IN SPACE

How did Verhoeven and his team convince Sony TriStar to stump up \$100m for a Nazi-themed satire of war movie conventions? By not telling them. "We slipped through because nobody paid attention," says the Dutchman, who benefited from a series of changes among the studio's execs. "I don't think I'm exaggerating – nobody paid attention because they weren't in power for long enough. A movie like this with slogans and uniforms and shots derived from a fascist movie? It would never be allowed to be made. It's so against normal Hollywood."

All the studio was interested in were the special effects. Pre-production got underway when Verhoeven, visual effects supervisor Phil Tippett and a skeleton crew shot a test sequence in the desert at Vasquez Rock, one-time backdrop for the *Lone Ranger* TV series. "We got [1984 Olympic Gold medallist gymnast] Mitch Gaylord and dressed him up as a soldier," says Tippett. "Paul had a bug chase him and tear him apart." It

was the first outing for Tippett's Oscar-nominated CGI work. The suits went crazy for the big bugs, right? Wrong, sighs the effects man.

"The studio guys were like [in a whiny, bureaucrat's voice] 'Where are its eyes? You have to have eyes so the audience knows where to look.' The warriors were designed with these two pincer claws so they could attack people. They didn't really have mouths, just a big pair of scissors. So the studio starts going, 'Where's the mouth? The creature has to have a mouth so it can eat people.' We were like, 'Here's the mouth, it's down here. It's too small to put a person in.' 'They don't eat people?! What do they eat?' 'Well they eat a kind of pulp back at their hives. They just do, you know?' That was the kind of idiocy we had to endure."

*Starship Troopers*' genius lies in its ability to give everyone what they want. There are guns, nudity, explosions, a love story and giant bugs for the popcorn crowd; then there's an ironic political commentary for anyone else who cares enough to notice it. The balancing act is unique: one minute the movie's showcasing the spectacle of CG arachnids assaulting a desert fortress; the next minute *RoboCop*-style ad-breaks are force-feeding us a satire of Nazi propaganda-speak: "The only good bug is a dead bug!" yell citizens as kids stamp on Earth's harmless insect population.

Heinlein's totalitarian future is presented as "a world that works" – and it does. The only problem is that it works by being a fascist dictatorship ruled by the philosophy of violence taught by Lt. Rasczak (Michael Ironside). The one-armed veteran tells the students in his citizenship class that "When you vote, you are exercising political authority, you're using force. And force, my friends, is violence. The supreme authority from which all other authorities are derived." Kids like Johnny Rico (Casper Van Dien), Carmen (Denise Richards) and Dizzy Flores (Dina Meyer) lap up the slogans while Verhoeven lifts shots from Riefenstahl.

The casting's vital: these identikit American kids are like a futuristic Hitler Youth, a bunch of *Beverly Hills 90210* clones with capped teeth, perfect hair and toned abs. "We started seeing all these young kids who were extraordinarily beautiful in that Hollywood way," says Neumeier of the casting process. "I said one day, casually,



Arachnid attack: Klendathu's creatures go on the offensive against the Roughnecks.



Johnny Rico (Casper Van Dien) under attack.

IMAGES: ALLSTAR, RONALD GRANT ARCHIVE, MOVIESTORE

'You know if we're doing *Triumph Of The Will* then we should make this movie body beautiful'. Paul's eyes just lit up..."

The studio wanted stars but Verhoeven picked unknown Van Dien to play the movie's square-jawed hero Johnny Rico. "Paul came out of his office with a soccer ball," recalls the athletic actor. "Then he kicked it at me. I kicked it back and it put a dent in one of the filing cabinets..." He had the part. It didn't matter that he'd never worked on a \$100m movie; that wide-eyed inexperience made the entire cast seem like brainwashed automatons – the sheep of this fascist "utopia".



## 'It didn't help my career, but then neither did *Showgirls*'

PAUL VERHOEVEN

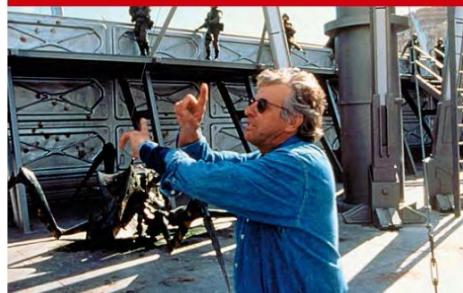
The brash young cast occasionally showed their age though, incensing Verhoeven with their immaturity. One flashpoint was the infamous nude shower sequence that was delayed until the end of the shoot. In the end, by way of example, Verhoeven and his DoP Jost Vacano stripped. "He did it to say 'F\*ck you' to us all," grins Van Dien.

"F\*ck you" was what *Starship Troopers* essentially also said to Hollywood and even to the studio that had green-lit its subversive message-mongering. When nerdy R&D scientist Carl (Neil Patrick Harris) turns up in a SS officer's black trench coat in the movie's final reel ("There was a sick sense of humour with the wardrobe choices," chortles Van Dien), it was obvious that the Dutchman's satire was not just another popcorn movie. As Tippett told Verhoeven: "Paul, you know what? After this movie, nobody's ever gonna let us make another movie like this again." He was right.

### STAND UP, BE COUNTED

"Did it help my career?" cackles Verhoeven when we quiz him about the movie's legacy. "No, but then neither did *Showgirls*." Marketed as a big tentpole summer movie but denied a US release until November 1997, *Starship Troopers* didn't earn the big figures expected. Negative press didn't help: *The Washington Post* accused the filmmakers of being

### CLOSE UP



Acting with CG co-stars is never the easiest thing in the world. Even less so when they're giant arachnids and you're being cooked alive in rubber armour in 104°F desert heat while your director demands multiple takes. "Someone would hold a tennis ball on a stick to show you where the bugs were," recalls Van Dien. "Then Paul would get out in front and start screaming 'Arrgh, ze bhugs! Bhugs! Bhugs! Arrgh!' Most of the time we were shooting Paul Verhoeven... and some times we really wanted to shoot Paul Verhoeven."

In the end it was Phil Tippett who took the brunt of the cast's frustration. "My role was like a choreographer," he recalls. "I would get a pole with an X on it and we'd have a group of soldiers shooting at a creature that was going to jump off a wall, rise up, get shot, lunge forward, get shot again then fall over. We had to rehearse it over and over so everybody got their eye-lines right."

During one sequence, Dina Meyer bugged out and unloaded a full clip of blank rounds in Tippett's face. "She was just acting like a precocious child," he says. "I had a heavy coat and a crash mask. But the concussion from the gun was like a jackhammer. I had to check my body like 'Am I really OK?'"

Nazi sympathisers; German, French and Italian audiences were outraged (Brits got the joke thanks to heavy marketing of the movie's ironic slogans).

Verhoeven sighs. "I thought we were making a provocative and innovative movie. That's true, I think, but of course, you get punished for that. So I mean my career in the US since then has certainly suffered..." It's hardly surprising. Most Hollywood blockbusters like to spoon-feed their anodyne messages down the audiences' throats; *Starship Troopers* refuses to do that.

"Michael Ironside was interested in politics," remembers Neumeier, "and there was a moment when he became concerned: 'Where is this movie? Is it about fascism and the dangers of it? Why aren't we clearly saying that the military is bad and this and this and this?' We never wanted to do that. We wanted to play it right down the middle. Paul's brilliant rejoinder to him was if we tell the audience, they're not going to think and they're not going to be entertained. Part of the entertainment is in figuring it out."

Is it pro-fascist? Nope. Anti-fascist? Nope. It's both at once – a movie that acknowledges both the seductive allure of militarism and pinpoints the political extremism it encourages. It's a mould-breaking film, a blockbuster that isn't willing to airbrush politics or ideology. Unlike the kind of propaganda it's inspired by, it's a movie that invites you to ask questions. "All movies about war are kind of fascist indulgences," concludes Neumeier, "which, I guess, is why we like them."

A CLOCKWORK ORANGE



# A CLOCK ORANGE



# WORK

WORDS CALUM WADDELL

We dust down our bowler hat for a look back at Blighty's most memorable slice of censor-baiting: Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*

Perhaps it's hard to believe in an era where downloading practically any movie ever made is as easy as a click of the mouse, but once upon a time certain titles possessed the sort of illegal allure that saw them smuggled into the UK as if they were hard drugs.

Yes, back in the merrie olde days before the internet and DVD it was VHS tapes that gave us our film-fix and if something was outlawed it was a right old pain in the posterior trying to locate it. Indeed, with Britain's beloved BBFC boasting an uber strict reign of repression during the '80s and '90s the sole way to see such forbidden fruit as *The Exorcist* and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* was to pay under-the-counter prices for grainy pirate editions on the black market. However, during this period one classic slice of carnage stood at the top of every collector's must-have list of contraband celluloid and that was Stanley Kubrick's 1971 blockbuster *A Clockwork Orange*...

Based on the bestselling 1962 book by Anthony Burgess (which the feature stays remarkably faithful to), *A Clockwork Orange* would, ironically, be banned not by Soho's censors but by Kubrick himself. Furthermore, as a direct result of the late, great filmmaker owning the British distribution rights, it would remain in UK limbo from 1973 up until 2000.

Talk about creating a legend around something...

"From what I understand, Stanley had suffered death threats to his family," maintains the film's star Malcolm McDowell, who became an instant icon thanks to his charismatic portrayal of youthful gang leader Alex DeLarge. "That, combined with the moral panic around the movie, led him to say, 'enough is enough.' At least that is what I could ascertain."

Certainly, after suffering critical scorn from the country's critics ("Muck in the name of art" scoffed *The Sunday Telegraph*, whilst the typically liberal *Daily Mail* led the call to remove it from cinemas) and with everything from school truancy to street muggings blamed on the picture, it might be no surprise to learn of Kubrick's decision to "punish" those stuffy Brits who just never "got" *A Clockwork Orange*. However, decades later and the movie is rightly viewed as a superb sci-fi satire – a look at a dystopian future where the youth are out of control and a right-wing government introduces a new programme of "therapy" which compromises the human right to free choice.

The direct result is that those with violent tendencies will be unable to so much as raise a fist without being paralysed with sickness and horror...

"It was the role of a lifetime for any actor," states McDowell. "And it is a film that changed things, right down to how people dressed or how directors used colour and music and set dressing... It became really big – especially in America, which people seem to forget because of all the controversy in Britain. But it was a huge film when it came out over there." >>

# A CLOCKWORK ORANGE



In a scene later homaged by Blur, Alex and his droogs spend time in the milk bar.



Adrienne Corri – “the best” – about to play the rape scene.

*A Clockwork Orange* would also challenge critics like no film before it because it presented McDowell as a thoroughly likeable rapist and murderer. A teenager, and schoolboy, whose distinctly antisocial pastimes include “ultra-violence”, a “spot of the old in out, in out” and sipping alcoholic beverages spiked with hallucinogenics. However, finally apprehended, the character gains our sympathy through his gruelling “rehabilitation” (which involves having his eyes pinned open and being forced to watch endless sequences of filmed torture) and the final vengeance undertaken towards him by his previous victims.

That McDowell is a colourful and enjoyable presence is hard to deny but Kubrick also skates

on thin ice by making his repulsive acts somewhat amusing to watch...

“I think it would be very hard to present a guy like that today,” admits McDowell. “Even back then it was dangerous. We were saying, ‘Here is this really despicable guy but you are going to grow to love him.’ So thank god for Kubrick who just said, ‘This is what I want to do and I won’t listen to anyone who tells me otherwise.’ You have to remember that *A Clockwork Orange* was Stanley’s small budget film. He had broken the bank on *2001* and he wanted to show Warner that he could do a small budget film and bring it in on schedule, which is what he did.”

Picked for the role in *A Clockwork Orange* after Kubrick saw his debut turn in Lindsay Anderson’s classic drama *If...* (1968), McDowell admits that he has at least one not-so-fond memory of the shoot. “I scratched my corneas during the scene where they pinned my eyelids open,” he bemoans. “That was *really* painful and not something I am happy to look back on,” he continues. “But, honestly, aside from that there is nothing I would want to do differently.”

## REPULSIVE ACTS

In light of this comment, it may be no surprise to learn that McDowell even has good recollections of shooting *A Clockwork Orange*’s most notorious sequence, wherein Alex and his gang of droogs break into the house of a wealthy author and proceed to beat him, turn the place upside down and rape his wife. “The lady in that scene is an actress called Adrienne Corri,” McDowell mentions. “I went up to her to say hello and she said, ‘Well Malcolm, you’re about to find out that I am a real redhead.’ I thought ‘My god – she is just *the best...*’ She was in her forties when we did it and she was fantastic. She could not care less about being naked and no wonder: she had a great body!”

## A CLOCKWORK CONTROVERSY

Unlike any film before or since, *A Clockwork Orange* provoked such a pandemic of newspaper headlines that the then-Home Secretary, Reginald Maudling, even mentioned that he wanted to see it due to “personal concern”. *The Times*, however, could only ask: “How much more violence, sadism and rape will movie-makers get away with?” If only they knew that *I Spit On Your Grave* was just a few years away...

It was also this moment which introduced *A Clockwork Orange*’s most infamous image: that of McDowell dancing and hollering along to “Singin’ In The Rain”. “As it was written we were supposed to enter the house and throw bottles through the windows and run around like yobs,” reflects the actor. “Every day I would come in and do just that but it wasn’t working: Alex was a little more sophisticated than that. Then one day Stanley came up to me and all he said was, ‘Can you dance?’ And I said, ‘Yes! Yes, I can dance!’ So I got my energy back and I began to improvise ‘Singin’ In The Rain’. Well, Stanley was totally enthused when he saw me do that. In fact, he grabbed me, put me in his car, drove home and called up New York. He bought the rights to the song there and then and we went back and started rehearsing it.”

Unfortunately this was easier said than done. “I had to ask people to remind me what I did,” he laughs. “Thankfully we had this wonderful script girl and she had been taking notes. I think it is one of those iconic moments in movie history. You didn’t think that at the time, of course – you just knew you had found the solution to





**'EVEN THE LOCAL GROCER WOULD RECOIL WHEN I WALKED IN THE SHOP'**

**MALCOLM McDOWELL**



McDowell ended up with scratched corneas after filming this scene.

something. It had to be a satirical moment that was dark, funny, outrageous and delicious all at once. And 'Singin' In The Rain' just came from the heavens [laughs]."

McDowell also claims that his relationship with Kubrick – famous for having his actors do take after take of the same sequence – was relatively harmonious. "I recall it was quite special when we shot the end sequence – you know, where I have tried to kill myself and I wake

up in a hospital bed. Well, I think we knocked that right out of the park – that just came along very well and Stanley was blown away by it. He never really gave his actors compliments but after he saw that scene he said, 'I just saw the dailies, Malcolm, and we got it. This is going to be a really amazing movie.' So if he said that to *me* then I knew it was going to blow *everyone* away."

Naturally, when *A Clockwork Orange* was released and became an instant cause célèbre

## A CLOCKWORK MEANING

Ever wonder what the title of *A Clockwork Orange* actually means? It is referenced just once in the book (wherein the rehabilitated

Alex is said to be akin to "a clockwork orange": indicating that he is now more of a machine than a man) but left out of the film.

For author Burgess, however, the term came from some Cockney slang: "as queer as a clockwork orange."



(everyone from MPs to Mary Whitehouse claimed that "a clockwork cult" of youth violence was overtaking Britain in its wake), its young star found it difficult to remain anonymous. "It was impossible to stay hidden," admits McDowell. "Even people like the local grocer... they would suddenly recoil when I walked in the shop. I'm sure he thought I was going to beat him up or something. It was a strange time for me. *A Clockwork Orange* affected people deeply. I still remember seeing some young people, I think it was around Leicester Square, exiting the subway station dressed as the droogs!"

### AT THE AWARDS

Nevertheless, one thing McDowell was not happy about was when the Oscar nominations were released: *A Clockwork Orange* ended up being given the nod for best director, picture, editing and adapted screenplay (sadly, but predictably, it failed to pick up a gong for anything) but its star was left unrecognised. "That was a bit surprising," he bemoans. "At the time I think I was baffled at being left out and, yes, it did hurt a little bit but I did not linger on it. I thought that *A Clockwork Orange* was as good a film as Kubrick had ever made and I knew that it would be seen in this light as the years went on. I mean, here we are still speaking about it 40 years later! I think we had the last laugh."

One person who was not amused by *A Clockwork Orange*, however, was Gene Kelly. The man who originally sang "Singin' In The Rain".

"*A Clockwork Orange* was the number one movie that Warner Bros had on release in America in 1971," recalls McDowell. "So I was flown out to Hollywood and I got to meet the studio heads and all that. Well, the minder at Warner said, 'Malcolm, there is a big party tonight. Would you like to go?' I said, 'Yes, I want to go – I haven't met any big stars yet!' Now I don't know whose party it was but it was in Beverly Hills and someone came over to me and said, 'Gene Kelly just walked in. Malcolm, would you like to meet him?' I could not believe someone was even asking me this! I said 'Gene Kelly? Of course I want to meet Gene Kelly!'"

It was, however, a decision he would regret.

"This guy tapped Gene on the shoulder," smiles the actor. "And he said 'Gene, I want you to meet Malcolm McDowell.' Well Gene turned around, looked me over and immediately walked off. I thought, 'I guess I don't blame him.' It is just a pity he didn't get it as a homage."

# ANATOMY OF A CLASSIC

► RELEASED: 22 February 1985 ► RUNTIME: 143 minutes  
► CERTIFICATE: 15 ► DIRECTOR: Terry Gilliam  
► WRITERS: Terry Gilliam, Tom Stoppard, Charles McKeown ► STUDIO: Universal

WORDS IAN BERRIMAN

# BRAZIL

We have a million things to say about this dystopian classic

## THE BANALITY OF EVIL

If dictatorship happened in Britain it would probably look a lot like *Brazil*: fascism in a bowler hat. We're good at creating bureaucratic systems that strangle people in red tape; good at breeding officious, mild-mannered clerks; skilled at sugar-coating the pill with politeness and euphemisms. Michael Palin's government interrogator has a neat little office and a secretary, and while he's carrying out "information retrieval" on "customers", his daughter is playing next door – a far more disturbing sight than any *Hostel*-style torture dungeon.



## SAM LOWRY



Sam is a fascinating protagonist, but one we feel ambivalent about. On the one hand, you feel for this quintessential Little Man, trapped in a job he hates, fantasising of romance. Anyone who's experienced unrequited love or imagined blowing up their office can empathise, and Jonathan Pryce's breathless awkwardness is endearing. However, although

he's only a small cog in the machine, he is still part of the machine, and it's because of the wilful blindness of Sam and thousands like him that the system functions. Sam's dream of fighting a Samurai ("Sam, you are I", see?) provides a clue – he is also the enemy. He's "only" a paper-pusher... but then, someone did the filing for the Third Reich too.

## SIGNS OF THE TIMES



There's too much visual information to absorb first time around. Take the signs and posters glimpsed in the background, inspired equally by wartime British government posters, American advertising of the '50s, and Orwellian slogans. "Suspicion breeds confidence", reads one. "Don't suspect a friend – report him", another. Gilliam's youthful reading of *MAD* magazine inspired him to cram the frame with detail. It might take a fourth or fifth viewing before you notice a Salvation Army-style band marching under the banner "Consumers for Christ", or the incongruous presence of a bouncy ball and a child's dummy amidst a torturer's array of implements.

## AQUARELA DO BRASIL

Ary Barroso's 1939 song inspired the title, which refers obliquely to the gap between Sam's fantasy world and his bleak reality; on a visit to the dingy beach at Port Talbot, Gilliam imagined someone sitting with a portable radio, listening to escapist Latin American songs. The tune recurs so often – sometimes diegetic (hummed by the characters), usually non-diegetic (as part of the score) – that it should become irritating, but thanks to some skilful arrangements it never does, working equally well as soaring, heart-swelling love theme and raucous samba. Kate Bush recorded vocals for the theme, by the way; they weren't eventually used, but can be found on the soundtrack LP.





## IT'S CHRIIIISTMAS!



It's easy to forget, but – like *Die Hard* and *Gremlins* – this is a Christmas movie. The sight of paper decorations hanging limply in Mrs Buttle's devastated flat and security guards practising carols in the basement of the Ministry adds an extra tang of bitter flavour; the idea that such a society can celebrate the season of "goodwill to all men" is horribly ironic. And when Sam is told that the new-found love of his life is dead, the news is broken to him by a man dressed as Santa Claus...

*Brazil* would make a good double-bill with another festive fantasy, of which it's the bleak obverse: *It's A Wonderful Life*. Descending into suicidal despair, George Bailey is shown a nightmare alternate world, then returned to the bosom of his loving family. Sam Lowry, meanwhile, briefly escapes his nightmare reality to find true love, but ultimately can only find happiness in madness.

## SOMEWHERE IN TIME

As the opening caption puts it, the time frame is "somewhere in the 20th Century". If it's the future, it's a very retro-styled future, of art deco TV sets and side partings, where children wear tanktops and shorts. Your average Joe didn't have email in 1985, but pneumatic tubes for carrying messages weren't ubiquitous; nor did your average PC look like the bastard offspring of a typewriter and a magnifying glass. *Brazil* is a film that exists in a distinctive, intricately designed, fully imagined world, and that has helped to preserve it from the ravages of time. It hasn't dated one jot.

## THE WAR ON TERROR



At the time *Brazil* was being made, the IRA were still carrying out high-profile attacks on mainland Britain – indeed, with the Brighton hotel bombing of 1984 they nearly succeeded in assassinating Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Looking back, it's remarkable that Gilliam and co factored terrorism into the plot, considering the level of public sensitivity – particularly since it's mined for comedy. When a restaurant is ripped apart by a blast, the reaction is terribly stiff-upper-lip: the staff conceal the carnage behind a decorative screen, and everyone continues tucking in as if nothing has happened. It's like a jet-black spin on the dinner scene in *Carry On Up The Khyber*.

## HAPPY NEVER AFTER



*Blade Runner* originally concluded with an ending that rings false: an escape into idyllic countryside. So does *Brazil*... until it's revealed as the fantasy of a man whose mind has snapped under torture. But it wouldn't have been that way if The Man had had his way. The battle between Gilliam and the head of Universal is well-documented: Sid Sheinberg recut the film and gave it a happy ending, but Gilliam fought back, taking out an ad in *Variety* to shame the studio into doing the right thing. Fittingly, he refused to be a cog in the machine. Because of that, *Brazil* isn't just a great film: it's an *important* film, because it shows that sometimes artists can take on the suits and win.

## CLASSIC SCENE: HARRY BUTTLE'S ARREST



1 The Buttle family are expecting a visit from Santa... but it's government stormtroopers that drop in through a hole cut in the ceiling.



2 Soon Harry Buttle is bagged and restrained, and informed that he's been "requested to assist the Ministry of Information with its enquiries".



3 After a bewildered Mrs. Buttle signs the forms thrust under her nose, the bowler-hatted bureaucrat hands her "your receipt for my receipt".

## CLASSIC DIALOGUE

**Sam Lowry:** "Excuse me Dawson, can you put me through to Mr Helpmann's office?"  
**Dawson:** "I'm afraid I can't, sir. You have to go through the proper channels."

**Sam Lowry:** "And you can't tell me what the proper channels are, because that's classified information?"

**Dawson:** "I'm glad to see the Ministry's continuing its tradition of recruiting the brightest and best, sir."

**SPYDEY SENSE**  
Sound designer Gary Rydstrom came up with a novel way to give the Spyders a voice: he discovered a research team that use a sophisticated recording system to capture the sound of real jumping spiders, normally undetectable to the human ear.

**PRE-VIZARDS**  
Janusz Kaminski employed the services of Pixel Liberation Front, who used software to create the set in 3D, which helped design the shot. It also tells you which crane to use for the camera, the height of lens from the ground and even the wall's height.

**BLOWING BUBBLES**  
Spielberg was going to create the air bubble using CGI but Cruise, ever the thesp, practised how to release a single bubble through the water.

**FUTURE FORUM**  
Almost all the technology in the movie – including the Halos and the cops' sonic guns – came from a three-day summit in California where Spielberg assembled luminaries in the world of science, technology and design to discuss the future.

**PORSCHE SPYDER**  
Artist Derek Gogol devised the three-legged method of movement for the Spyders, but the brief from production designer Alex McDowell was that they should look like a "pager designed by Porsche that would clip onto belts... that looks like a grenade".



 "These things are happening right now. We have cameras in the city that are watching people. Where people go and surf the web, there's someone watching them and taking notes on the sites they go to, what they buy. It's happening to us right now."

**Tom Cruise, actor**

 "George Orwell's prophecy really comes true. What little privacy we have will be evaporated in 20 or 30 years, technology will be able to see through walls, through rooftops..."

**Steven Spielberg, director**



 "The great thing about Philip [K.] Dick is his unconnectedness. He never felt he was part of the same world you and I are."

Jon Cohen, writer



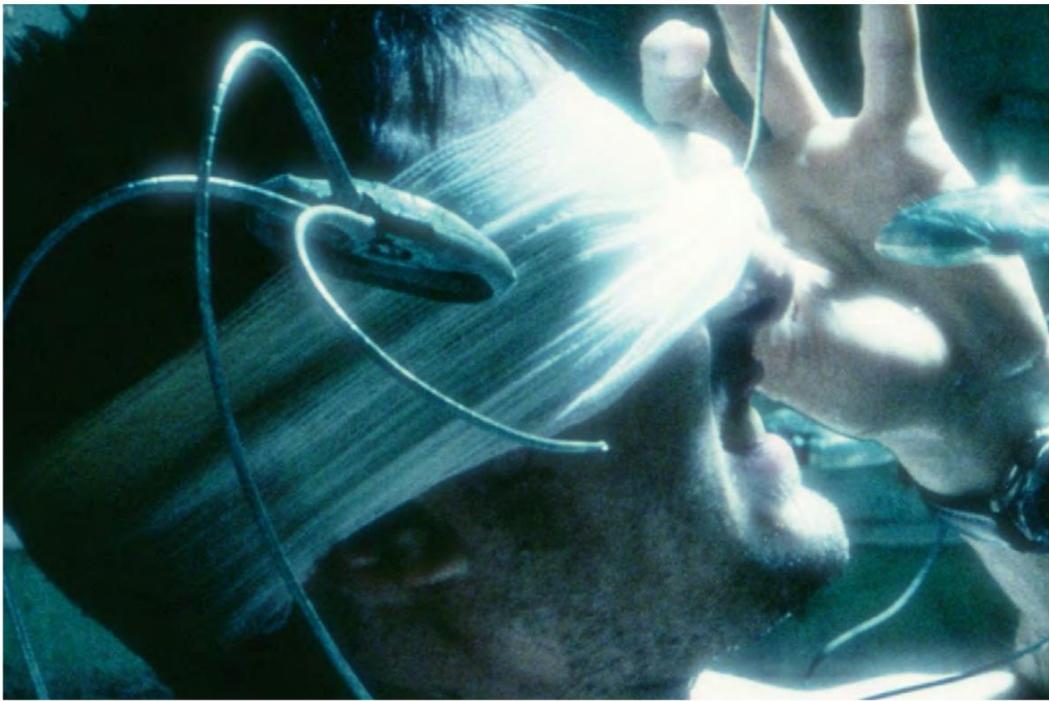
 "I love those mechanical Spyders and the sequence needed to have music, certainly. The object here was to characterise these little objects, make them feel as if they're alive."

John Williams, composer

# MINORITY REPORT

## CLASSIC SCENE

Mecha Spyders go on the spy in the prescient sci-fi



**M**uch more than just another chromed, clean-lined, beautifully polished Philip K. Dick adap, *Minority Report* represents a colossal cinematic partnership. Steven Spielberg and Tom Cruise flirted with a number of projects over the years, but it was a grimy, paranoiac Washington DC of 2054 and the PreCrime division that finally asserted their destiny. While it never transcends into greater-than-the-sum-of-its-parts territory – that really would be quite remarkable – Spielberg's neo-noir scrutinises the precariousness of society's most deep-rooted values, while Cruise smolders with fierce intensity as PreCrime Chief John Anderton. It was also alarmingly prescient: some of the technologies in the film are now so commonplace that, when describing today's gadgets, "Minority Report" can be used as an adjective...

### Setting the scene

- The Precogs are all named after mystery authors: Agatha (Christie), Arthur (Conan Doyle) and Dashiell (Hammett).
- A Spyder-like device is being developed by the military.
- Washington DC was chosen as the location as it was deemed a city that would maintain core elements of its architecture (Capitol Hill, The White House) even in the future.
- *Report's* stark look was achieved through a bleach process in post that removed all the colour. Spielberg said he wanted it to be "the ugliest, dirtiest movie" he'd ever made.

A.I. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



# A.I. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

WORDS CALUM WADDELL

Steven Spielberg's sci-fi flick has a lot more Stanley Kubrick in it than many realise, and it's improved with age



Jude Law: at his most beautiful?



Steven Spielberg: the man for the job after a decade's delay.

**S**teven Spielberg, Stanley Kubrick, a talking teddy bear, Jude Law as a robotic prostitute and the end of the world reimagined as a tear-jerking summer blockbuster: it can only be *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* – a film that took three decades to see the light of a cinema projector.

Released in 2001, the movie re-set the Pinocchio story in a dystopian future where a young child robot called David (played by Haley Joel Osment) has been programmed to love. Given a family whose real son has been placed in suspended animation until a cure for his terminal disease can be found, David warms to his surroundings and his new parents. However, there is nothing like real flesh and bone and when David's "brother" is finally brought out of his coma and cured, sibling rivalry erupts and our robotic hero is forced to flee into the wilderness of a fast-deteriorating planet.

If that sounds like a tricky sell then take heed: *A.I.* is a project that began its gestation in the early 1970s, after Kubrick – then fresh from *A Clockwork Orange* – became fixated by the Brian Aldiss short story "Super-Toys Last All Summer Long". Yet, when the filmmaker decided that the technology was not yet advanced enough to create the special effects essential to the movie's futuristic plot, *A.I.* went on the back-burner. Then, in 1989, Kubrick opted to fire Aldiss from screenwriting duties (replacing him with novelist Ian Watson) before concluding that the whole sci-fi shebang might be better off in the directorial hands of Steven Spielberg.

#### INCREDIBLE ALDISS

"I still remember the day that Stanley called Spielberg to say he had a great project for him," begins Jan Harlan, the producer of *A.I.* and Kubrick's brother-in-law. "He told Spielberg all about this incredible Brian Aldiss story and, within 24 hours, Spielberg flew from LA to London to visit Stanley. The problem for Stanley was that *A.I.* required a lot of effects work. It was unlike anything else he had done and that's why he decided Spielberg would be the better director. I think it was a

decades at amber – was ever likely to get the green light.

"I had been working with Stanley for 10 years on *A.I.*," says Chris Baker, the film's conceptual artist. "And I think Steven's biggest part was to get this made into an actual film, because it could have been a huge four-hour movie. Steven took the ideas we'd been working on and made them into something practical."

Certainly, one thing not in doubt is that Kubrick, who has a producer credit on the finished film, left *A.I.* in Spielberg's hands because he felt it was a movie that demanded someone with more hands-on experience of modern special effects. Indeed, according to Harlan, Kubrick at one point demanded that the film's child lead be portrayed by a fully-functioning robot – something that, even today, isn't easy to realise.

"Yes, Stanley tried to build an artificial boy for *A.I.*," says Harlan. "Of course it absolutely failed [laughs]. But that only reflected the difficulties of making this film. However, Stanley did not want to give up on *A.I.* He had fallen in love with the short story by Brian Aldiss and he had worked for years to get a screenplay that he approved of.

"Then he discovered the wonderful conceptual work of Chris Baker and that helped him to further envisage this world. Believe it or not, Stanley and Chris did all of this work

by fax – Chris would actually fax Stanley his art work. I remember when Spielberg first visited Stanley and all of Chris's art work was spread out on Stanley's huge kitchen table. That was how Stanley encouraged Spielberg to come on board."

#### A.I. AFTER KUBRICK

As a result, Spielberg made sure that – following his friend's death – Kubrick's folly was posthumously realised. Thus, in June

**'The Kubrick fans who think Spielberg meddled with his vision are wrong'**

**CHRIS BAKER, CONCEPTUAL ARTIST**

sign of great generosity and intelligence to realise that."

Not, unfortunately, that this meeting of two great movie minds sped production up any and, when Kubrick passed away in March 1999, it looked as if that might be that insofar as *A.I.* went. Sure, Spielberg might have agreed to helm this tale of artificial Armageddon, but with its main production force, Kubrick, no longer alive, it was almost unthinkable that this dream-team opus – then spending almost three

2001, American audiences finally encountered *A.I.* However, this "feel bad", two-and-a-half-hour, end-of-the-world epic was, rather oddly, released at the height of the summer season (whereupon it competed against the more obviously commercial likes of *Jurassic Park III*, *Tomb Raider* and *Moulin Rouge*). Viewers and critics alike were, to say the least, somewhat dumbfounded.

"Steven wanted to tell this dark story about the destruction of mankind," admits Harlan. "You have to remember that in *A.I.* we jump forward 2,000 years and all that is left as a remnant of human ingenuity is robots. There's an element of fairytale in the film as well. But fairytales also attach themselves to our nightmares. I think that *A.I.* reflects this."

That said, one thing that many critics were fast to pick up on is the fact that Kubrick, with his noted ambiguity and subtlety, was a far, far different filmmaker from Spielberg – whose work typically draws a clear black and white line between "good" and "bad" and often falls into slushy sentimentality. With *A.I.* this clash of personality is perhaps most evident in its multiple conclusions that, with added voiceover, narrate Armageddon from a sugar-sweet childlike perspective.

&gt;&gt;

# A.I. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Over-sentimental or a masterwork? Time will be the judge.



CGI work helped the director's vision become reality.



"The ending of the movie had changed but a lot of the elements that people think are all Spielberg were actually always there," reveals Baker. "That cute teddy bear was always there and the legend of the Blue Fairy, which is straight from *Pinocchio*, was also always there. The fact that Haley Joel Osment's character had never had a birthday was always there too. The Kubrick fans who think Spielberg meddled with his vision are wrong. If you think about it, it all comes back to the fact Kubrick wanted Spielberg to direct this movie. Maybe he just felt Spielberg's sensibilities were better suited to it. The interesting thing is that even while we were making it in California, everyone was saying 'Wouldn't it still be great to see the Kubrick version?'"

Even so, Baker does admit there are at least a couple of elements in Spielberg's version of *A.I.* that he could do without. "I would have liked the ending to be without the voiceover," he says. "It is a bit like *Blade Runner*. I prefer that movie without Harrison Ford's voice. I would have liked a little ambiguity there. But I didn't say any of that to Steven [laughs]. I also would have liked the design of the robots at the end to be a little bit edgier. Stan Winston's studio chose to take that in a different direction. I think they are maybe a little bit soft-edged in the final film. When I was designing the robots – because the film jumps forward 2,000 years – I felt it had to reveal a technology that we cannot understand. I felt that the material the robots would be made of should be something you wouldn't expect to be flexible but is – maybe something like marble or porcelain. I think that the finished robots look more like something from *The Abyss*."

## SEPARATE VISIONS

Harlan, meanwhile, is quick to point out the differences between the two directors but also notes a very important similarity between them as well. "Yes, Stanley loved to be ambiguous," he agrees. "Look at films like *2001* which are full of ambiguity. Kubrick never explains anything. He thought it was a good idea to leave an audience thinking for themselves. He hated it when *2001* came out and people said 'What does the ending of this film mean?' He would always say 'Why do I even need to explain this to you?' That is why he never spoke to the press. He hated having to explain his work. He didn't feel films should come with an instruction manual. But for me, what is more important is what connects Spielberg and Kubrick and that's that their films do not disappear. Look at how many films vanish like yesterday's newspaper. But all Kubrick films and all Spielberg films live on. They do not go away."

However, in the case of *A.I.* the criticism that initially greeted the film related to its

## KID A.I.

For a brief moment child star Haley Joel Osment was one of the best-known actors on the planet. Breaking into the big time with his Oscar-nominated turn opposite Bruce Willis in 1999's horror hit *The Sixth Sense*, the fresh-faced 11-year-old followed this up with *A.I.* before silently sinking into the category marked "Where are they now?" Indeed, despite staying busy with voice work on Disney's *The Country Bears* (2002)

and *The Jungle Book II* (2003), our lad would not be considered newsworthy again until 2006, when he was involved in a bone-breaking car accident and ended up being charged with drunk driving and drug possession. Oh dear.



perceived soppiness – in particular the finale in which Haley Joel Osment's super-sensitive artificial hero David, alongside his talking teddy bear, are found by robots frozen deep in the icy sea that has destroyed all of humankind. Clutching a lock of his "mother's" hair, the robots are able to use this DNA to resurrect David's parent for 24 hours – the last human in history – allowing the film's pre-teen star to enjoy the happiest day of his life.

Slushy? Overly-sentimental? Many thought so. "People do say that and yet *A.I.* ends with the destruction of mankind," sighs Baker. "It is actually a very depressing movie. It is dark. A lot of the people I spoke to at the time thought that the film should have ended earlier than it did but I disagree. Spielberg was making a film about the demise of mankind. You had to leave the theatre with the knowledge that the robots had inherited the earth."

Spielberg's vision of End Times did not, however, blow up the box office, as might have been expected. Instead, the \$100 million-budget *A.I.* sunk in American cinemas with a gross of just \$80 million – a dire number considering the titanic talents involved in its production. To make matters worse, the feature was held back for UK release until 21 September by which point the closing scenes of the Manhattan skyline destroyed under the power of global warming was all too reflective of a very recent tragedy.

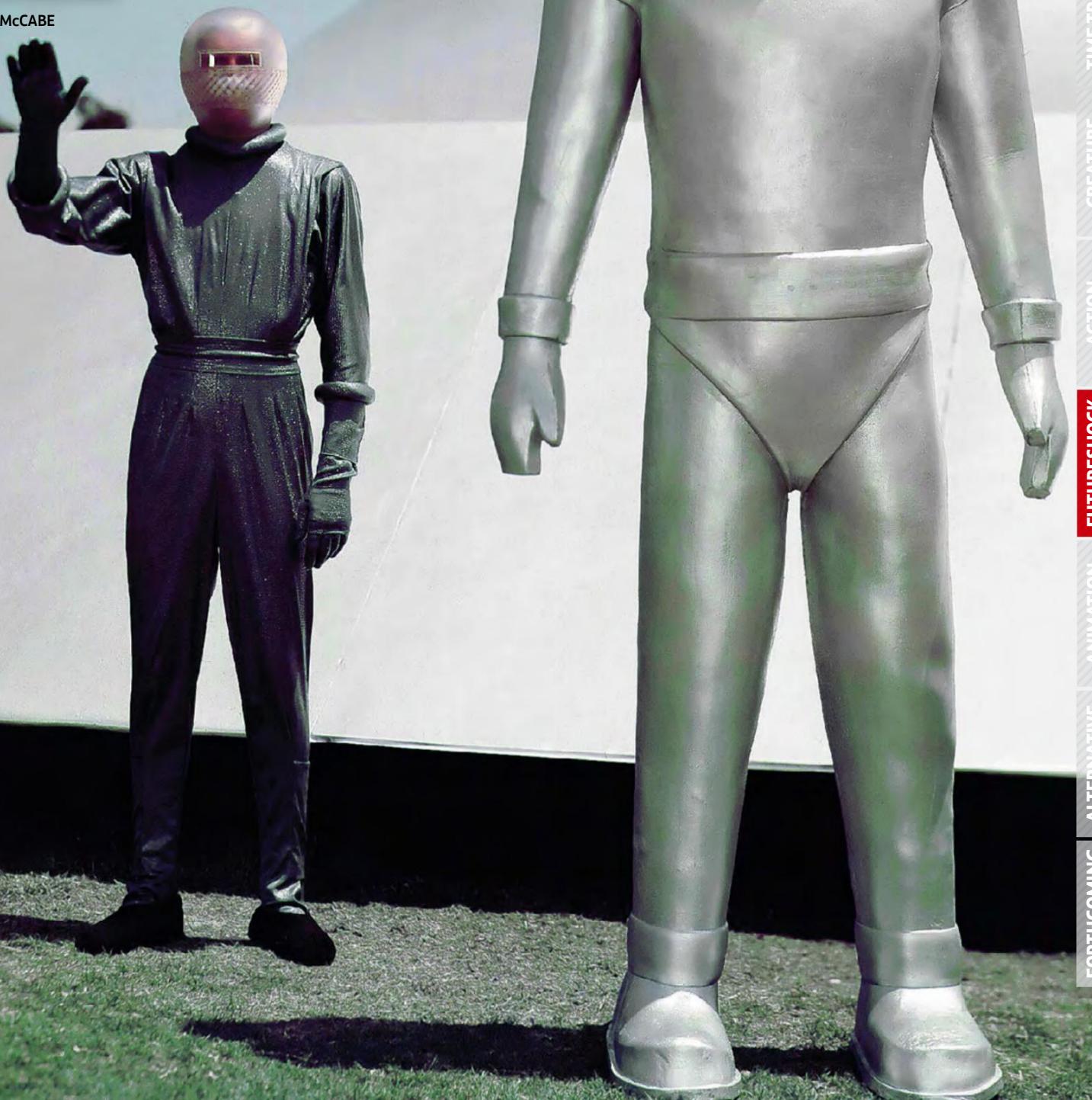
"We were very unlucky with 9/11," admits Harlan. "That took all of the focus away from cinema – and with good reason – but some of the people who saw *A.I.* began to 'read' the element of 9/11 into it. But how could anyone have predicted that?"

All these years later, though, Harlan thinks *A.I.* might just be beginning to achieve a new level of respect. "Things change," he claims. "And I believe that in five or 10 years people will finally realise how important and even prophetic *A.I.* is." In other words: the apocalypse came too early.

# THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL

Looking back at the original incarnation of the chillingly memorable science fiction classic

WORDS JOSEPH McCABE



GREATEST EVER MOVIES

OUTER SPACE

SUPERHEROES

TIME TRAVEL

CREATURE FEATURES

ACTION STATIONS

FUTURESHOCK

ANIMATION

ALTERNATIVE

FORTHCOMING

# THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL

Although director Robert Wise's seminal 1950s science fiction screen classic was concerned with nothing less than the survival of humanity in the newly born atomic age, its origins were modest. It began like so many films of its era, as a product of the dying Hollywood studio system. Julian Blaustein, a staff producer for Twentieth Century Fox, and his assistant began searching for a suitable subject for a thoughtful sci-fi film. "People don't buy tickets to listen to lectures," Blaustein once remarked. "You defeat yourself if you try to say something in purely politically oriented statements. It becomes a bore." He told his assistant, "Our theme is that peace is no longer a four-letter word (*sic*). After reading "a couple hundred science fiction stories and novels," the pair found a tale in the October 1940 issue of the popular magazine *Astounding* – Harry Bates's "Farewell To The Master". "It was about 42 pages," said Blaustein. "And I just didn't like very much about the story, but what I did like really started the wheels turning..."

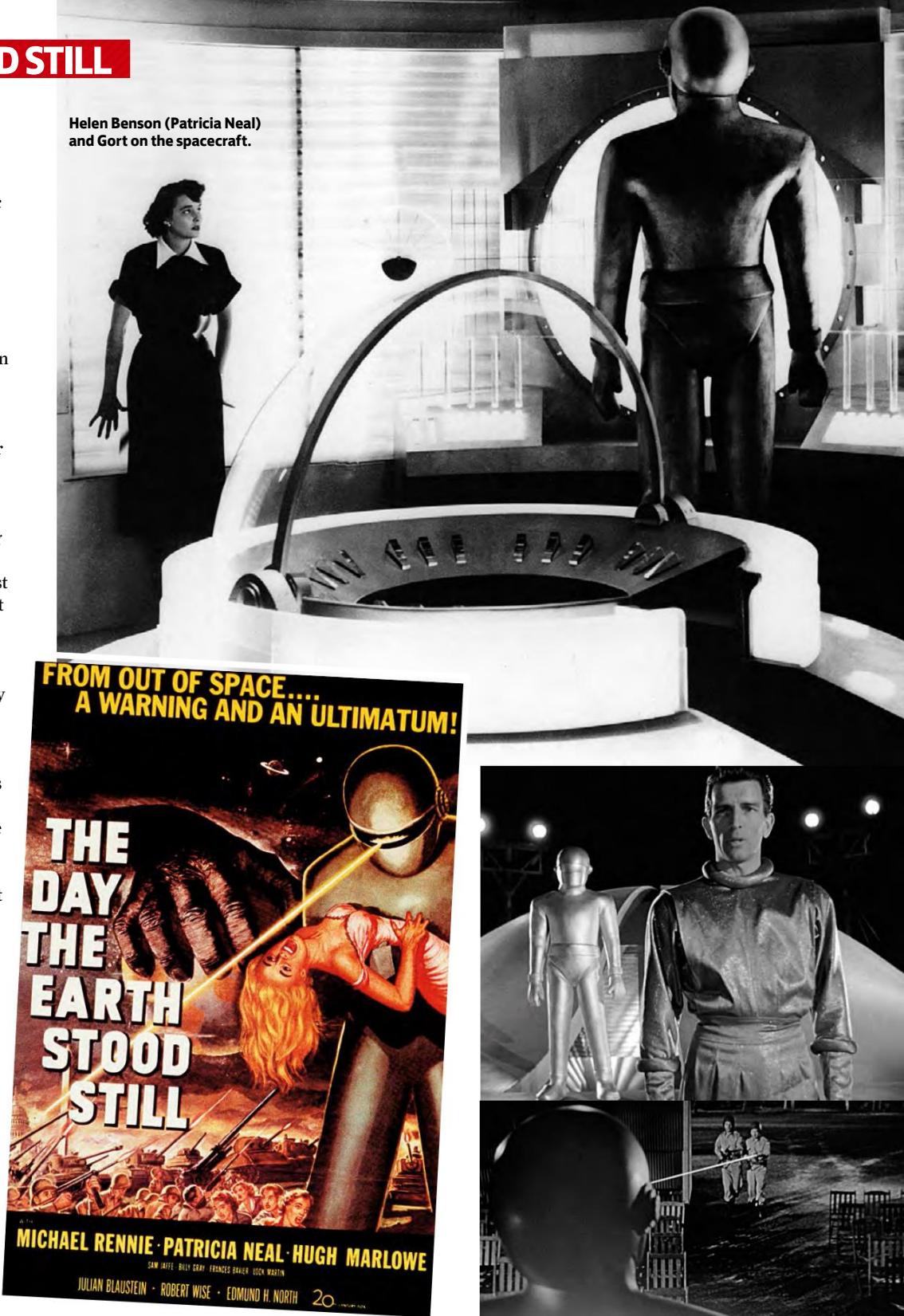
Bates's tale provided the basic set-up for *Day*, in which a visitor from another world travels to Earth in peace, only to be attacked by those who fear the unusual. "The idea that what turns out to be a man steps off the spaceship, brings an offering as a gift, but because it's strange and certainly unusual, he's immediately shot at by our military and seriously wounded... That appealed to me. The way that we deal with strange things is with weapons, guns. No effort at finding out how the other person thinks, feels, works. Different from us? Kill him!"

## BETTER DEAD THAN RED

Broad as this theme was, it was certainly controversial in the early '50s, when McCarthyism was in its infancy, and the Red Scare was just gaining momentum in the United States. As Kenneth Von Gunden and Stuart H. Stock describe it in the chapter on *Day* in their definitive study *Twenty All-Time Great Science Fiction Films*: "There was a very real fear that Communist-controlled producers and screenwriters were secretly inserting party propaganda into movie scripts." But factor in that America had dropped the first atomic bomb on Japan just a few years earlier, and that the polarising Korean War was one year underway, and any concerns about blacklisting on the part of Blaustein were tempered by an even greater fear – that the world's destruction was imminent.

Blaustein brought in Edward H. North, a staff writer at Fox, to adapt Bates's story to the screen. North developed the character of Klaatu, the kindly alien visitor, who – in an effort to better understand humanity – disguises himself as an ordinary man and befriends an understanding widow and her son, eventually enlisting their aid in demonstrating the awesome might of his people, by neutralising all electricity on Earth for 30 minutes (only hospitals, planes in flight, and "things of that nature" are spared). Klaatu

Helen Benson (Patricia Neal) and Gort on the spacecraft.



is eventually gunned down, but he's brought back to life by his giant robot companion Gort ("Gnut" in Bates's story), who – it's revealed in the film's climax – is actually an intergalactic law enforcement officer that Klaatu's race has surrendered some of their sovereignty to in order to ensure the survival of their race. The only means of stopping Gort is the three-word command the film would make famous: "Klaatu barada nikto."

North's religious symbolism – Klaatu adopts the name "Carpenter" before he's killed, resurrected and ascends into the heavens in his ship – went unnoticed at the time by director



Helen cowers at Gort's presence.

**'OUR THEME IS THAT  
PEACE IS NO LONGER A  
FOUR-LETTER WORD'**  
JULIAN BLAUSTEIN, PRODUCER

Robert Wise. Wise had made his Hollywood breakthrough as an editor, cutting *Citizen Kane* for Orson Welles, before honing his skills as a director of suspense and the fantastic for legendary RKO genre producer Val Lewton. For Lewton, Wise directed 1940s gems like *The Curse Of The Cat People* and *The Body Snatcher*. On *Day*, he applied his gift for cool, realistic drama, and once more grounded a story many may have perceived as a little too fantastic.

"Because of the nature of this story," said Wise, "I felt it was very important to make it as real and believable as possible. We had this opportunity of having a visitor from another planet come to us, so let's make it as everyday as we can in terms of the settings, the surroundings. This place, Washington DC, is the capital of our country – we see the streets, the buildings of Washington, and the homes of Washington, and I thought it was very important to make this as down to earth and believable as possible – to put our character from the other planet right in the midst of the ordinary, everyday life of people in this country."

To that end, Wise was helped immensely by cinematographer Leo Tover, whose black-and-white photography, deep and crisp, underlined the human drama that distinguished *Day* from

the many gaudy colour sci-fi spectacles of its decade. "I was happy to do it in black and white," said Wise, "and get as much of a realistic documentary feel as possible, even though it was a fiction piece."

The black and white also allowed for the careful placement of shadows across Gort, whose eight-foot-tall costumes – worn by seven-foot, six-inch Lock Martin, an actor and former doorman at Grauman's Chinese Theater – were lined with laces. When Gort walked towards the camera, he wore a costume with the laces on the back; and when he walked away from the camera, he wore a second costume, on which laces were in front.

#### TUNES OF GLORY

Wise brought on board composer Bernard Hermann, with whom he'd worked on *Citizen Kane*, to compose *Day*'s eerie, memorable score. Hermann, well known to genre fans for dozens of classic compositions (including those for Ray Harryhausen and Alfred Hitchcock's finest efforts), created electronic themes for the film years before *Forbidden Planet* popularised the style for science fiction cinema. "I felt," said Hermann, shortly before his death in 1975, "we should do it by taking advantage of using electronic instruments, which hadn't been done then."



Gort, Helen and the re-animated Klaatu.

Wise also enlisted future Academy Award-winner (and wife of famed children's book author Roald Dahl) Patricia Neal in the role of Helen, the widow whom Klaatu befriends; and Hugh Marlowe (later to star in the Harryhausen epic *Earth Vs The Flying Saucers*) as Helen's boyfriend Tom – the film's "Judas", who betrays Klaatu for a shot at fame. Klaatu himself would be played by British actor Michael Rennie, despite the protests of studio chief Darryl F. Zanuck, who initially wanted Spencer Tracy in the role, and Wise's instinct to go with Claude Rains, who was then too busy with a stage production to sign on. Michael Rennie's performance, understated yet confident, cool but impassioned, is perhaps the definitive screen portrait of benign life. He's entirely believable in the climax, as he delivers the film's pivotal speech about universal peace through compromise.

"The main idea in that story that was appealing was that peace in the universe had been achieved by sacrificing some sovereignty to a central agency," says Blaustein. "But irrevocably. So that the United Nations, for us, became the focal point of the way to go to world peace. Give the United Nations full authority to step in, to put down violence wherever they saw it. Give them the equipment, the manpower – which of course we knew was unrealistic. To give up sovereignty is something that's very hard to ask heavily nationalistic entities to do. But it was an idea that was very appealing."

Today – with seemingly never-ending war in the Middle East, civil strife on every continent, and a distrust on the part of many Americans towards the UN – the appeal of Blaustein's idea has, sadly, not lessened. But neither has the conviction with which other filmmakers choose to tackle it. *The Day The Earth Stood Still*'s legacy can be seen on screen in everything from *2001: A Space Odyssey* to *The Man Who Fell To Earth* and *E.T. The Extra Terrestrial*, from Spielberg's motherhood to the ominous shadows of *Independence Day*. It's a warning, an inspiration and an enduring touchstone of fantasy film.

# ANATOMY OF A CLASSIC

► RELEASED: 8 February 1968 ► RUNTIME: 112 minutes ► CERTIFICATE: A  
► DIRECTOR: Franklin J. Schaffner ► WRITERS: Rod Serling, Pierre Boulle (original novel)  
► STUDIO: Twentieth Century Fox

WORDS RICHARD EDWARDS

# PLANET OF THE APES

We like every ape we see, from chimpan-A to chimpanzee



## HIGH CONCEPT

With a plot that boils down to "astronaut lands on world ruled by intelligent monkeys", *Planet Of The Apes* is the epitome of the high-concept ideal that went on to rule Hollywood in the '80s. It's what the film does with the simplest of ideas that makes it work, however. On one level it's that old story of a fish-out-of-water, but beyond that it's loaded with enough allegory to get any '60s activist excited; as well as being the ultimate anti-war movie, there's conflict between science and religion, as knowledge is repressed for the supposed "greater good". There's even a very '60s theme of sticking it to the man (or ape), courtesy of chimp-teen *Lucius*.

## COURTING THE ZEITGEIST

There's little doubt the world would be better off without most of the *Apes* sequels, the TV spin-off, the cartoon and Tim Burton's 2001 "reimagining". It's hard to deny, however, that the original movie's stark imagery and talking simians tapped into the zeitgeist in a then-unprecedented way. From a range of toys rolled out before George Lucas had even contemplated the word "marketing" (monkeys were always going to appear above 2001 playthings on Christmas lists) to that iconic shot of the Statue of Liberty, a mixture of timing and content made sure *Apes* crossed over in the most spectacular way.



## CHARLTON HESTON

The obituaries may have concentrated on his roles in Biblical epics like *The Ten Commandments* and *Ben-Hur*, but Heston's torso-baring performance in *Apes* is one of his finest. His Taylor is not a likeable man, a nihilistic, unsympathetic mission commander who accepts his mission through space was always a one-way ticket and expects his crewmates to do the same. Nonetheless, his performance lets his character evolve so that come the end you're rooting for a character persecuted in the most absurd of situations – you really share his pain when he takes that final sucker punch to the gut, courtesy of the Statue of Liberty.



## THE MUSIC

While the other big science fiction movie of 1968, *2001*, went for a lush, classical score, *Planet Of The Apes*' soundtrack is positively avant garde. Light years away from his symphonic offerings for the likes of *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, Jerry Goldsmith's score is light on melody, heavy on short bursts of strings and drums, and it adds an extra disconcerting layer to the film's otherworldliness. The score's influence can still be heard over the closing credits of *Lost* and *Battlestar Galactica*.



## MEN IN SUITS



While the obvious way to play an ape would involve lots of shrieking and scurrying around on all-fours – much as Tim Roth did in the Burton film – the stars behind the make-up resist the temptation to act and deliver something much more satisfying. Lead chimps Kim Hunter (Zira) and Roddy McDowall (Cornelius) are the stand-outs, the humanity of the characters shining through in their unmistakeable voices and their subtlety of movement – no mean feat when the use of your face is so restricted.

## THE MAKE-UP

John Chambers was awarded a special achievement Oscar for his simian make-up, and even after four subsequent decades of developments in prosthetic technology, it's easy to see why these apes were so groundbreaking back in '68. Although the actors' mouths barely move behind the pronounced primate jaw, the make-up allows the eyes to do the emoting, ensuring the apes are more than just walking sculptures of chimps, orangutans and gorillas. And while they lack the realism of Rick Baker's designs for the Tim Burton movie, it's Chambers's apes that will go down in the prosthetic hall of fame.



## THAT ENDING

It's been spoofed so much – in everything from *Spaceballs* to *The Simpsons* – that it's easy to forget how powerful the movie's final shot must have been back in 1968. Forget *The Sixth Sense*, this is the daddy of movie twists. Even when you know what's coming, you've got to admire the perfect execution: Taylor pounding the ground in anger, the furious "Damn you all to hell!" and that famous reveal, as a nondescript sculpture on the beach turns out to be the Statue of Liberty. That it's all done without music, the only sound the waves breaking, only serves to maximise the impact. Pure genius.

## STRANGE NEW WORLD



It would take a pretty inept cinematographer to make the deserts of Utah and Arizona look anything other than striking – legendary Western director John Ford spent his entire career making the vast plains look beautiful – but in *Planet Of The Apes* the filmmakers take it to the next level by making the barren landscape feel like a genuinely alien world. The planet exists in that elusive hinterland between far-fetched, green-skinned landscape and the classic *Doctor Who* quarry, a place that could just as easily be on the other side of the universe as the Earth of a dystopian future.

## CLASSIC SCENE: TAKING LIBERTY



1 Taylor leaves the cares of the ape-world behind as he rides to freedom with Nova (Linda Harrison), the local girl that he's fallen for.



2 Hang on just a sec... Something's not quite right here. Taylor jumps from the horse and starts bashing the sand in anger.



3 It was Earth all along! As they said in *The Simpsons* episode "A Fish Called Selma", it seems they've finally made a monkey out of Chuck!

## CLASSIC LINE

Taylor: "Take your stinking paws off me, you damned dirty ape!"





WORDS RICHARD EDWARDS

# her

Joaquin Phoenix falls in love with an operating system with Scarlett Johansson's voice in Spike Jonze's latest

When Spike Jonze set out to make *Her*, he wanted to craft a vision of the future that we'd instantly recognise; a world where human beings are intertwined with digital devices. "I think a lot about the way I'm so personally interfaced with technology," he admits, when we meet in a London hotel, shortly before he'll jet off to the Rome Film Festival, where he'll see his star Scarlett Johansson win a Best Actress prize.

No surprise there, you might think, except that Johansson is never seen on screen. She voices the role of Samantha, an artificially sentient operating system – or OS1 – at the core of a new home computer belonging to Theodore Twombly (Joaquin Phoenix), a lonely writer still navigating his way through a painful divorce. Forget Siri, "Samantha" grows increasingly intelligent with every response. Soon, Theodore is laughing and flirting with her. And then it goes further: much further.

Jonze did his research. "There was all this stuff about the way operating systems were affecting society," he says. But then something hit him. "Whenever I got to the parts that were

about society and technology, I thought 'It doesn't make sense in this movie.' I realised as I was writing it that I really wanted to make it a relationship movie."

It would hardly be the first time. At the heart of his 1999 debut *Being John Malkovich* – a fantasy that sees a puppeteer find a portal into the titular actor's brain – was a twisted tale of surrogacy. In 2002's loopy meta-fiction ride *Adaptation*, it was a fraternal affair, with Nicolas Cage playing twin screenwriters. His 2009 take on Maurice Sendak's *Where The Wild Things Are* was about a boy cosying up to giant creatures from a land of his imagination. Even his 2010 short *I'm Here* dealt with a romance between robots.

In the case of *Her*, "I'm certainly writing about our relationship with technology but really I'm writing about our relationship with each other and our relationship with ourselves," Jonze says. Still, the film raises a host of philosophical questions – from whether we will one day start dating virtual beings to asking at what point does an AI system like Samantha go from emulating consciousness

# 'IT'S ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH TECHNOLOGY AND WITH EACH OTHER'

SPIKE JONZE

to becoming fully conscious? "It's something we maybe never know across the course of the movie."

Born in 1969, Jonze (real name Adam Spiegel) is old enough to remember the days before tech dominated our lives – back in the '80s when he was a photographer, on BMX/skateboarding magazine *Freestylin'*. "I feel really lucky that I got to experience the '80s, but also lucky that I got to experience the '90s, and super-lucky that I'm getting to experience right now. Everything has happened so fast in the last ten years."

#### WHEN LA MEETS SHANGHAI

In *Her*, the OS systems are not the only things to have evolved. Although nominally set in Los Angeles, it's not the city you'd recognise from the cluttered, rain-soaked vision of the future in *Blade Runner*. It's a pristine, poverty-free, pastel-coloured imagining. Jonze boldly shot in both LA and Shanghai and "collapsed them together", a subtle hint that maybe in the future, the Chinese will be exerting an even greater influence.

Videogames also seem to be the dominant cultural force. Theodore plays an immersive adventure that projects a 3D image into his living room, the character controlled by motioning his fingers in the air. "The idea for that kind of controller, that you don't need a controller, definitely came from Wii and Xbox Kinect," says Jonze. "I thought those were pretty radical ideas when I saw them... and I think it's only the tip of the surface in terms of where they're going to go with videogames."

Amusingly, the character that Theodore interacts on screen with is a bubble-shaped chap that keeps aggressively berating him and flipping him off; never mind being abused in *Call Of Duty* multiplayer, this simply cuts out the middle man. Meanwhile, Theodore's friend and neighbour (played by Amy Adams) is a game designer, currently working on a title called *Perfect Mom*, in which players control a potential domestic goddess.

What it does show is that we seem only a few mouse-clicks away from a world where we will start bonding with technology. More than that, it suggests we may not be the smartest

things on the planet. "Is artificial intelligence less than our intelligence?" asks Jonze. "That's really interesting to me. We have a lot of narcissism in our belief in ourselves – that our form of consciousness is somehow more superior than other forms of consciousness." Maybe the robots will take over, we suggest. Jonze shrugs, a "why not?" answer. "Well," he adds. "We did."

Joaquin Phoenix: not the first man to fall for Scarlett Johansson.



# ANATOMY OF A CLASSIC

► RELEASED: 9 September 1982 ► RUNTIME: 117 minutes (give or take for the various editions) ► CERTIFICATE: 15 ► DIRECTOR: Ridley Scott  
► WRITERS: Hampton Fancher, David Webb Peoples  
► STUDIO: Warner Bros

WORDS JORDAN FARLEY

# BLADE RUNNER

Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep? Let's take a Spinner to LA 2019 and find out

## FINAL CUT



There have been few films with quite so many alternate versions as *Blade Runner*. Disastrous screenings of Scott's original 113-minute workprint in 1982 resulted in the studio-sanctioned theatrical

cut – including a laughably ill-judged happy ending (swiped from footage for *The Shining*) and Deckard's infamous, droll voiceover. After the success of *Blade Runner* on home video and at late-night, arthouse screenings of the workprint in the early '90s, however, a "Director's Cut" was released, excising the happy ending/voiceover and adding the short sequence where Deckard daydreams a unicorn. Scott, ever the busy fellow, had little input on the "Director's Cut" and returned to LA 2019 in 2007 to oversee the "Final Cut" – largely an exercise in tidying gaffes digitally, but unquestionably the definitive *Blade Runner*.

## DANGEROUS DAYS

For a film with such a chequered post-release history it's hardly surprising production itself went about as smoothly as your average council road. From complete script rewrites to casting difficulties (Dustin Hoffman was in talks to play Deckard for months) via financial turmoil, it's a miracle *Blade Runner* ever made it onto 35mm. A big part of the problem was Scott himself. Ever the perfectionist, he would keep the camera rolling for dozens of takes until satisfied, or request major set overhauls, exhausting the American crew to the point where they waged a t-shirt war on the director. He hit back with slogans like "Xenophobia Sucks". To top it all off in the face of a summer owned by *E.T.*, the film tanked at the box office, taking more than a decade to truly find its audience.



## CLASSIC DIALOGUE

Tyrell: But this, all of this, is academic. You were made as well as we could make you.

Batty: But not to last.

Tyrell: The light that burns twice as bright burns for half as long – and you have burned so very, very brightly Roy. Look at you, you're the Prodigal Son. You're quite a prize.

Batty: I've done... questionable things.

Tyrell: Also extraordinary things, revel in your time.

Batty: Nothing the god of biomechanics wouldn't let you into heaven for.

## DEC A REP?

Ever since Scott slipped a unicorn into the '92 Director's Cut, one question has been on the lips of anyone who watches *Blade Runner*. Is Deckard a Replicant or what? The evidence suggests so: Deckard's unicorn daydream (and Gaff's origami unicorn implying he knows), the fact his apartment is littered with photographs like Leon's and the red, Replicant, glimmer seen in Deckard's eyes at one point all signify Robo-Rick. That and the fact Scott said in 2007, "If you don't get it you're a moron".



## SYSTEM SHOCK

There have been few films with quite the same long-lasting visual impact as *Blade Runner*. Along with the work of French artist Moebius in SF comic *Heavy Metal* (which Scott cites as an inspiration) and William Gibson's novel *Neuromancer*, *Blade Runner* practically defined cyberpunk as a genre – its influence clear in everything from *The Matrix* to *Battlestar Galactica* and videogame *Deus Ex*. Designer Syd Mead was brought on board as "Visual Futurist" (best job title ever) to help realise the look of LA, erm, five years from now, along with Director of Photography Jordan Cronenweth on arguably the last great in-camera special effects movie.



## LIFE ON MARS



No-one builds worlds on film quite like Ridley Scott, from *Gladiator*'s Roman majesty to *Alien*'s truckers in space. But perhaps his single greatest cinematic achievement in this sense is LA 2019, more a living, breathing society than a complex tapestry of actors, sets and special effects. Under permanent shroud of night and a blanket of acid rain, the dying industrial cityscape is breathtaking to behold, but it's the small details that truly convince this culture is alive: umbrellas with lights for staffs (because they spend so long under there), City Speak (an adapted form of Hungarian), the melting pot of species (from Hare Krishnas to thieving Jawa-like dwarves) and the ubiquitous neon advertisements. As many have commented, step out onto the streets of LA at night and you might just recognise what you see.

## SOUNDS OF THE CITY

Just as memorable as the film's groundbreaking visual style is Vangelis' stunning soundtrack. Hot off an Oscar win for *Chariots Of Fire*, his innovative mix of melodic arrangements and pulsating electronic synth elevates the future noir to poetic levels. Vangelis' haunting, ethereal musings never overwhelm, only complement, and it's a testament to the soundtrack's quality that it's endlessly pleasing on the ears, with or without the pictures to accompany it. Unfortunately despite the end credits promising a release "soon" it wasn't until 1994 that an official soundtrack went on sale. It still hasn't stopped those crafty bootleggers hocking their own versions at conventions for more than two decades, mind.



## CLASSIC SCENE: TEARS IN RAIN



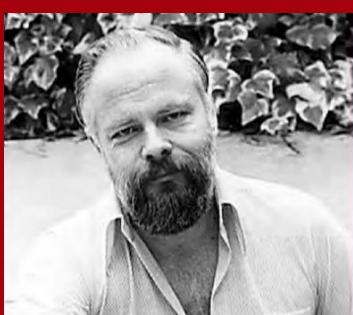
1 Deckard tracks down Replicants Pris and Roy Batty to an abandoned building. After retiring Pris, Deckard is bounded by Roy, who gets the upper hand by snapping two of his fingers.



2 Stripping down to his shorts in a display of bestial showmanship, Roy chases Deckard onto the rooftops. Deckard must hang on for dear life after his leap falls short.



3 "I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain. Time to die." Touching, profound and partially improvised by Hauer.



## PHILIP K. DICK

Author Philip K. Dick has been Hollywood's go-to child for high-concept sci-fi ever since *Total Recall* brought in the bucks for Arnie, but it was the vernacular surrealist's novel *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?* that would first be adapted for the silver screen. Though radically different to the source, the film captures the soul of Dick's writing like few since. Even the notoriously sceptical Dick had kind words to say about the film before his untimely death just before its release in 1982.

# ANATOMY OF A CLASSIC

► RELEASED: 17 July 1968 ► RUNTIME: 90 minutes  
► CERTIFICATE: U ► DIRECTOR: George Dunning  
► WRITERS: Lee Minoff (story) and many, many others ► STUDIO: MGM

WORDS RUSSELL LEWIN

# YELLOW SUBMARINE

All aboard! Time to head back to the Swinging '60s and go on a psychedelic trip with the Fab Four

## HIDDEN MEANINGS

The Beatles always had their songs and other material analysed for deeper meanings. The "Paul is dead" conspiracy theory was perpetuated by, among other things, album covers: on *Sgt Pepper* there is a "wreath" of flowers which spells "Paul"; on *Abbey Road* a car number plate reads "28 IF" – the age Paul would have been had he continued to live; and on the soundtrack album of *Yellow Submarine*, Paul has fingers raised above his head, an Indian symbol signifying impending death. The plot of the *Yellow Submarine* film has also been variously interpreted as parallel to *Ulysses*, *Beowulf* and *The Lord Of The Rings* and some claim that "Yellow" signifies sun, fire, spirit or mental energy and therefore the submarine itself represents an act of creation. That's the '60s for you.



## THE SONG

The film's title track was recorded in spring 1966 for inclusion on the Beatles' epochal album *Revolver*. It was dreamt up by Paul, with John and folk singer Donovan helping with the lyrics, and released as a double A-sided single with "Eleanor Rigby", reaching number one. Taped in a party atmosphere, with the likes of the Rolling Stones' Brian Jones and Marianne Faithfull in attendance, it utilised ships' bells, wind machines and a metal bath full of water. Premier Beatles critic Ian Macdonald described it as "a sparkling novelty song impossible to dislike" but it's actually one of the Fab Four's more polarising songs and has probably done more to misrepresent them to subsequent generations than any other.



## THE SCRIPT

Around 40 writers contributed to the script, including Liverpudlian poet Roger McGough, from comedy group The Scaffold, and Erich Segal, an English professor who acted as script director. It's a witty, playful work of genius with the sort of fondness for puns that the Beatles themselves had been exhibiting since *A Hard Day's Night*. ("What would your friends be doing here?" "Displaying." "Displaying what?" "Dis-playing around.") Masses of pop culture is referenced, including *The Avengers*, *Frankenstein*, *King Kong* and several Beatles songs including "Help!" and "Fixing A Hole". Despite the fact that the Fabs themselves don't voice their characters (but they do show up at the end for a final burst of "All Together Now") the film captures their humour and unique inter-group repartee.



## THE ANIMATION

You could take any single frame of *Yellow Submarine*, blow it up and hang it on your wall – the film's bold and bright visions represent the zenith of the '60s explosion in artistic expression, and draw on everything from the pop art of Andy Warhol to the surreal imagery of Salvador Dalí. Made for just £385,000 over a period of 11 months, over 200 animators worked on the project, frequently being bussed in for night-shifts from



London's art schools. When you consider this was 1967, the summer of love, it's little surprise that this hothouse of young, mixed sex talent conceived 13 babies in the period! Canadian George Dunning was in

charge as director, a man who would fluster for several minutes if asked what sort of pencil he wanted to borrow, but a perfectionist and an innovator. Producer Al Brodax, who had been responsible for the Beatles' TV cartoon series, also saw that he was surrounded with the talented likes of John Coates as line producer and Heinz Edelmann as art director, who later called the film "an albatross round my neck" because despite his numerous achievements in his field, it was all anyone ever asked him about.

## THE SOUNDTRACK

With pop's greatest ever act providing the songs the film was never going to be short of terrific tunes, but it's the way they're seamlessly slipped into the narrative that's so delightful. "Nowhere Man", from 1965's *Rubber Soul*, becomes a character, one who speaks only in rhyme ("If I spoke prose you'd all find out / I don't know what I talk about"); "When I'm 64" accompanies the band rapidly ageing as they go through the Sea Of Time and sprout huge white beards; psychedelic classic "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds" and its world of "cellophane flowers of yellow and green" could not be more at home (and is stunningly animated, created by tracing and then splicing together thousands of frames of old Fred Astaire films); "Hey Bulldog" sees the band grapple with, yes, a bulldog (with four heads); and of course it's the anthem of universal love and peace, "All You Need Is Love" that is sung to vanquish the Blue Meanie threat and return Pepperland to a state of serenity.



## AFTERWARDS

The film was a commercial and critical success all around the world (Roger Ebert wrote, "It is beautifully simple and childlike on one level, and erudite and deep on another") and it's said to be one of the Queen's favourite films. A digitally remastered version was rereleased in 1999 and the advent of computer animation had done little to dull its dazzling cornucopia of riotous, colourful imagery. Merchandise-wise, you still can't peruse a branch of Forbidden Planet without seeing its distinctive artwork on everything from mugs and lunchboxes to badges and postcards. The name "Yellow Submarine" has been given to two Spanish football teams, a London nightclub, a backpackers' hostel in Brisbane and a sandwich shop in Pennsylvania. A 51-foot steel replica of the submarine itself now sits in the grounds of Liverpool's John Lennon Airport.



## CLASSIC DIALOGUE

**Paul:** "Look, it's a school of whales."  
**Ringo:** "They look a little bit old for school."  
**Paul:** "University then."  
**Ringo:** "University of 'Wales'."  
**John:** "They look like drop-outs to me."

## CLASSIC SCENE FAB FOUR ASSEMBLE!

1 Young Fred has managed to enlist Ringo's help in saving under-attack Pepperland. All they need to do now is find the other Fabs somewhere in his sizeable house...



2 It's down to the lab and, oops, is that Frankenstein's monster come to bash people up? Nah – give peace a chance, as one potion later he's transformed into good ol' John. That's two down, two to go.



3 George is discovered meditating atop a mountain, so that just leaves Paul. The search involves a near miss with a steam train that happens to be lurking in one of Ringo's rooms, but seconds later Macca appears clutching a bouquet – the Fabs can now set off on their quest!



WORDS ANDREW OSMOND

# Akira

**A** first on BBC Two now; groundbreaking animated science fiction from Japan. As manga [sic] rockets in popularity in Britain, the most celebrated example yet is *Akira*, a bizarre and sometimes violent vision of Neo-Tokyo."

BBC announcer, introducing the first UK TV broadcast of *Akira*.

Somehow, that BBC Two introduction said it all. Among anime fans in Britain and America, *Akira* is both paradigm and pariah. The film that mainstream pundits trumpet as the archetype of anime, even as in-the-know fans gibber in outrage. Forget *Kimba* and *Speed Racer*, *Yamato* and *Gatchaman*. Forget *Lady Oscar* and *Doraemon*, *Sazae-san* and *Sailor Moon*. Forget Joe Yabuki and Lum-chan, Nadia and Nausicaä. *Akira* is king – or perhaps Kaneda, as most of the iconic stills and poster images show the scowling biker rather than the sleeping boy-god. In large chunks of the world outside Japan, *Akira* is the genre-defining equivalent of *Star Trek* in science fiction or *The Lord Of The Rings* in fantasy. One British style magazine gave *Akira* the modest title of “the *Citizen Kane* of anime”. Like Neo-Tokyo’s armed forces, we’re helpless against the might of Katsuhiro Otomo’s creation.

So hello to Armageddon, teenage bikers, neon-lit megacities, psychic duels and “Not For Kids” stickers. All these things came to define the Western image of anime after *Akira*. Was that bad? Of course it was bad, for anyone who thought that anime history pre-dated 1988. Does this mean *Akira* is a bad film? Heck no. *Akira* is a great film. Watching it now, over two decades after it hit the West like an SOL satellite strike, three obvious things about it hold true. First, it’s brilliantly made. Second, it’s a hell of a mess, at least taken as a stand-alone film and not as a celebratory remix of Otomo’s then-unfinished manga. The third is that it’s actually better *because* it’s a mess.

## CONFUSION AMID TECHNICAL BRILLIANCE

Technically, *Akira* rivals any anime film made before or since. Its insane detail and enormity of vision is rivalled only by the likes of *The Wings Of Honneamise*, also made during Japan’s “bubble” boom in the ‘80s. Moreover, *Akira*

Is the archetypal anime as brilliant as its reputation suggests? We say yes, despite its flaws



conforms to “Disneyfied” Western perceptions of good animation in a way few anime do. Superficially, this means things like extra-smooth and fluid movements, without held frames or super-deformed cutouts, topped off by generally convincing lip-synch (at least in Japanese). More deeply, it means actual cartoon acting, of a kind common in Western animation but seldom given priority in anime. Look at the swaggering of the biker-gang leader Yamagata, the powerful but contained motions of the imposing Colonel, or the preening gestures of the high-school girls.

Characterisation is also among *Akira*’s main failings, and one reason why so many viewers find it incoherent. In a making-of documentary, Otomo said, “There’s no one hero in Neo-Tokyo. It was never my intention to build the story around one central character. Rather, I attempted to show many different perspectives on life in this vast megalopolis.” Which is all well and good, but more focus would have helped no end. The film has so many ill-defined characters, unresolved threads and unanswered questions that despite its two-hour

running time, you feel another hour landed on the cutting-room floor. Of course, the real director’s cut is the manga strip, familiar to the Japanese target audience but no help for Western newbies.

Yet the confusion is part of the fascination. It’s impossible to watch *Akira* and not envision the endless backstories, sidetracks and subplots that were suggested but undeveloped. If Otomo ever turns *Akira* into a television franchise, it could last years without running short of material.



# WALL-E

WORDS RICHARD EDWARDS

What's Pixar's robot hero made of?



## ZAX

(*Benji, Zax & The Alien Prince*)

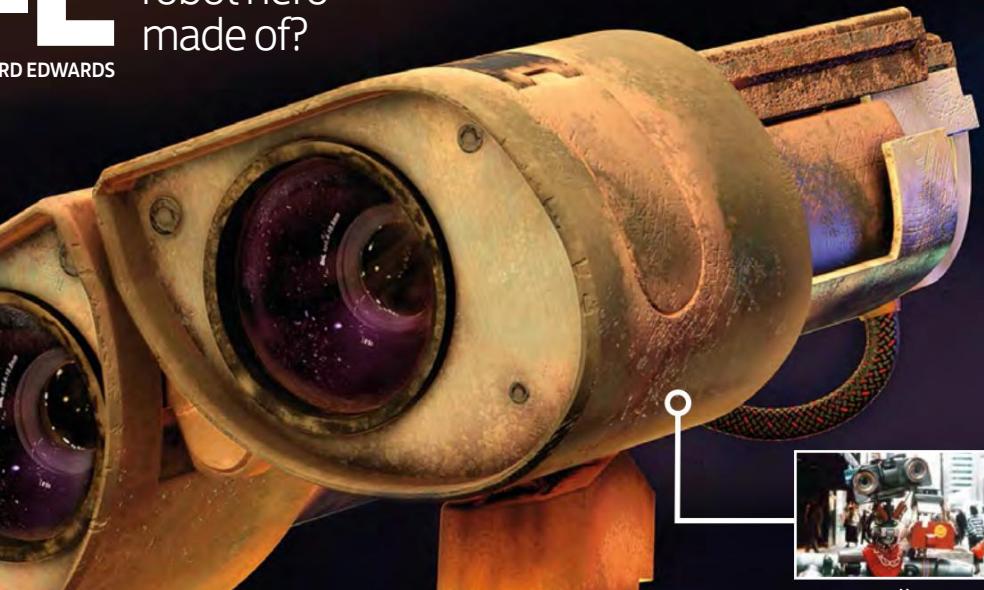
You've got to admit there's a certain resemblance in the eyes...



## R2-D2

(*Star Wars*)

He's got the same vocal tics, and the way WALL-E's solar panel folds in and out is borrowed straight from R2's Swiss Army knife-style array of gadgets.



## NUMBER "JOHNNY" FIVE

(*Short Circuit*)

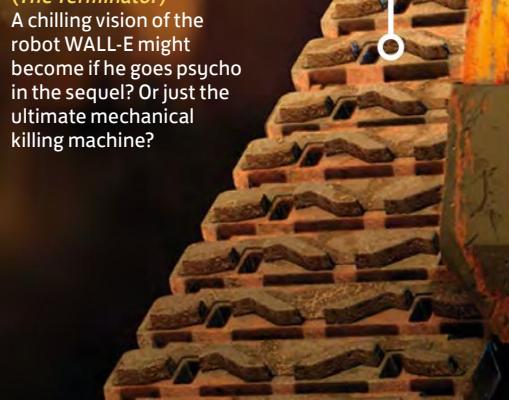
Could they be brothers? If only the over-talkative Number Five had taken WALL-E's vow of silence.



## A HUNTER KILLER

(*The Terminator*)

A chilling vision of the robot WALL-E might become if he goes psycho in the sequel? Or just the ultimate mechanical killing machine?



## HERBIE

(*The Fantastic Four*)

Think WALL-E's a tortuous acronym? Try Humanoid Experimental Robot, B-type, Integrated Electronics for size.



## HUEY, DEWEY AND LOUIE

(*Silent Running*)

Functional to the point of ugliness, these horticulture bots are nonetheless rather endearing – like WALL-E, proof that a menial droid can still be sweet.

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# WESTWORLD

Remembering **THE GUNSLINGER**, Yul Brynner's robot killer



RUSSELL LEWIN,  
FORMER PRODUCTION  
EDITOR AND WRITER  
FOR SFX MAGAZINE

There's something intrinsically appealing about the unstoppable killer.

Striding around, effortlessly repelling all bullets and attempts to stop him, he surely personifies what we ourselves would like to be: invincible, indestructible, immortal.

No wonder filmmakers have been drawn to the concept, including James Cameron in the fabulous *Terminator 2* and John Carpenter in the *Halloween* films. But Carpenter credits another film with influencing him, and that film is *Westworld* (1973), starring Yul Brynner as the stoic, unstoppable Gunslinger.

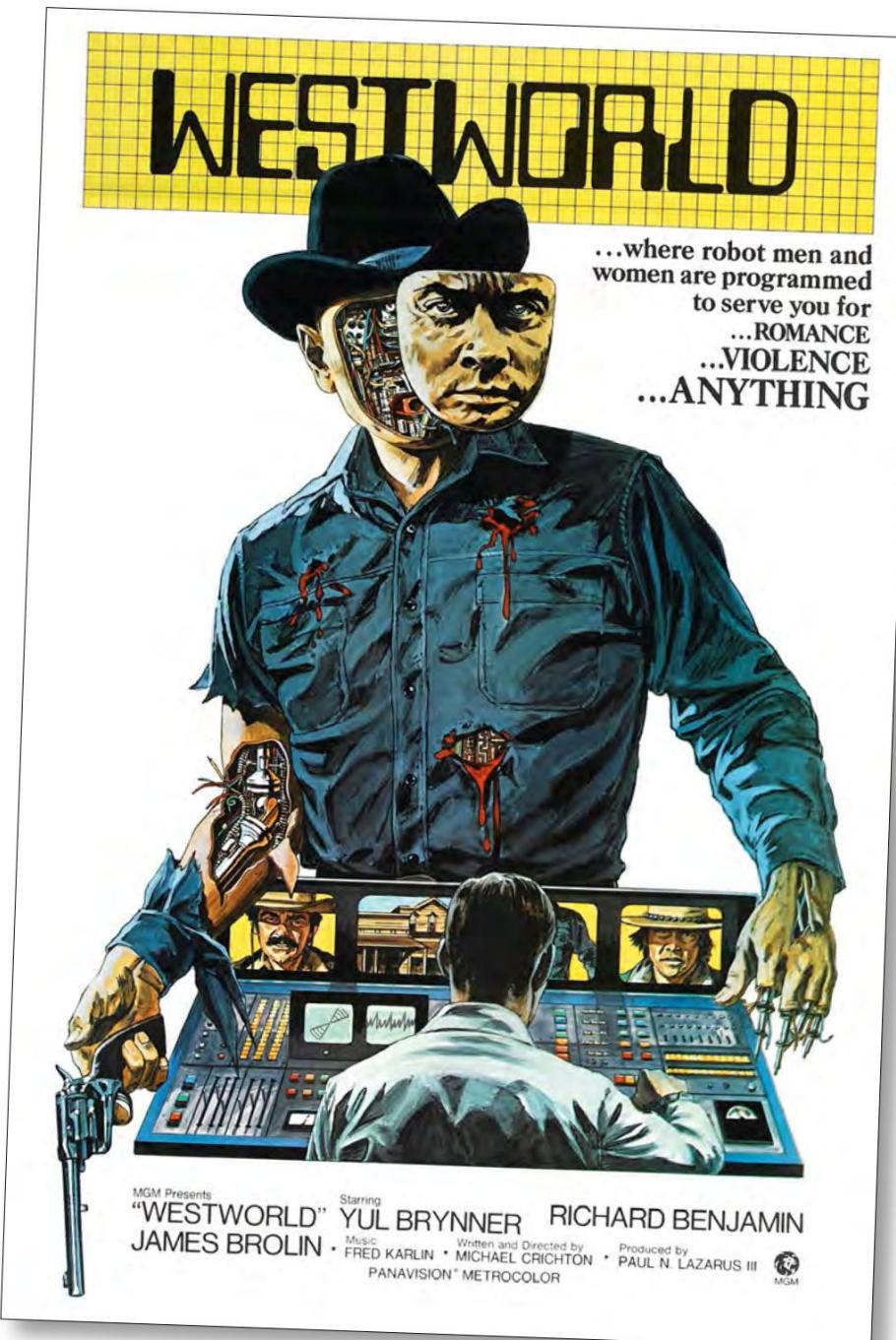
Written and directed by the late, great Michael Crichton, *Westworld* was one of the first sci-fi films I saw as "my own". Richard Benjamin and James Brolin play tourists heading to the ultimate amusement park of the future, where they choose to visit Westworld (the other choices are Medievalworld and Romanworld), a recreation of the old American West. Unfortunately their holiday is dashed by something worse than sunburn: a black-clad robot who develops a fault and relentlessly tracks them down, with very real murder in his eyes (and what eyes!).

Brynner, echoing the look of his character in *The Magnificent Seven*, is simply brilliant in the non-speaking role. He's properly scary, right from the start, when he challenges Peter (Benjamin) to his first duel. You feel nervous for the poor holidaymaker. The film slowly and deliciously builds the tension as the Gunslinger keeps returning from the tech centre and eventually goes completely haywire, along with the rest of the amusement park. Sometimes we see the action from his own pixelated point of view, which was technically innovative at the time, and is enormously effective.

The final act is essentially a long chase, as the Gunslinger, despite being badly damaged, keeps on padding the corridors of the operations centre.

I've never been a fan of Westerns, which this sort of is, but it's far superior to most thanks to its gimmicky twist. It's compulsive and thrilling, and at its centre is the coolest, leanest, most iconic killer ever put on screen.

IMAGE COURTESY THE KOBAL COLLECTION



## FACT ATTACK!

- Yul Brynner died of cancer in 1985. He recorded a message that was broadcast after his death that said: "Now that I'm gone, I tell you: don't smoke, whatever you do, just don't smoke."
- Crichton got the idea from a trip to Disneyland. We wonder how long it will be before there's a real-life Westworld – hopefully not too long.
- A sequel, *Futureworld*, came out in 1976, but isn't as effective (although Brynner's Gunslinger is in it, albeit briefly). In 1980 a TV series, *Beyond Westworld*, lasted just three episodes.
- The word "gunslinger" was only coined in the 1950s and was not used in the bygone days of the Old West.
- Star Trek's Majel Barrett has a small role in the film as whore/robot Miss Carrie.

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# Eternal of the

Break ups, crack ups: the demented minds of Michel Gondry and Charlie Kaufman take the romcom into psychotic territory in this Philip K. Dick-inspired sci-fi oddity. It's love Jim, but not as we know it... WORDS JAMIE RUSSELL

**E**ternal Sunshine is a movie about memories. About what it means to remember and what it costs to forget. Penned by mind-messing master Charlie Kaufman, directed by hip French pop video surrealist Michel Gondry and starring the unlikely pairing of rubber-faced Jim Carrey and Brit luvvie Kate Winslet, it's one of the most original, bonkers and touching films of the 2000s – a muddled masterpiece of brain bamboozling cinema. If Philip K. Dick had watched *When Harry Met Sally* one too many times, he might have sketched out the treatment for it in between writing *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?* and *We Can Remember It For You Wholesale*.

Kaufman loves Philip K. Dick. But *Eternal Sunshine*'s memory-erasing conceit didn't come directly from the American sci-fi writer; he was just a prominent influence. It was actually based on a remark that one of Gondry's buddies, the French conceptual artist Pierre Bismuth, once made to a friend. Fed up of listening to her

moaning about her boyfriend, Bismuth asked her if she'd consider erasing him from her memory – if such a thing was possible. She said yes.

It set Bismuth thinking. What would it mean if you could press a switch and wipe a person out of your mind? Inspired, he designed little cards that read, 'You have been erased from someone's memory' and sent them out to people as an art project. When Gondry received one through his mailbox, he knew there was a movie in it. "This simple idea instantly opened up a can of ideas in my skull," he remembers. "Then I met Charlie and everything became more complicated..."

#### BLUE RUIN

Nobody writes like Charlie Kaufman. "Oh, my gosh," says Carrey. "It's like Moses coming down from the mountain with the tablets every time he has a script. All of Hollywood goes, 'It's heeeeere! He's just so rock'n'roll, and at the same time, he's a complete intellectual."

*Eternal Sunshine* sums up that contradiction nicely: its title is cribbed from 18th Century poet Alexander Pope ("How happy is the blameless vestal's lot!/The world forgetting, by the world forgot./Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind!/Each pray'r accepted, and each wish resign'd..."); meanwhile, its migraine-inducing structure is destined to give screenwriting guru Robert McKee panic attacks.

Brushing aside three-act conventions, *Eternal Sunshine* begins where it ends, an encounter on the beach at Montauk, outside New York, between ground-down everyman Joel (Carrey) and kooky, blue-haired Clementine (Winslet). As casting goes, it's anti-expectation. Carrey reigns in his usual shtick to do vulnerable and nerdy. Winslet flips into overdrive as the wacky, sexy Clementine, a tomboy man-eater with permanent PMT. Neither star plays to >>

# Sunshine Spotless Mind



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# ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND

type; even putting them together flouts some unspoken law of the universe. Why? "Because I've played Ophelia and he was Ace Ventura," jokes Winslet.

What happens between the bookends is what impacts, a falling in and out of love during which Clementine decides, on a whim, to have all memories of Joel surgically erased from her brain using a pioneering new technique dreamt up by Lacuna Inc. When Joel next meets her, she literally blanks him. She has no memory of who he is. Furious and lovelorn, he decides to have the procedure himself. "Does it cause brain damage?" he asks Lacuna's brainiac Dr. Mierzwiak (Wilkinson). "Technically speaking, the procedure is brain damage," the doc explains benignly.

## YELLOW FEVER

Problem is, the erasure doesn't quite work as well as it should. Slacker lab technicians Mark Ruffalo and Elijah Wood (the cackling Beavis and Butthead of neuroscience) botch the brain wipe and Joel watches his memories of Clem disintegrate as they're zapped one by one. It's possibly the most surreal romcom ever made, a head trip mash-up of avant-garde experimental film techniques that propels us down Joel's neural pathways as he watches his memories of Clementine vanishing in reverse.

"Most of the movie takes place in his brain as she's being erased," explains Kaufman, "and you see their whole relationship, moment by moment, backwards from this sort of bad end to the better beginning. Halfway through, as the memories start getting better, he decides he doesn't want the procedure." By then, though, it's too late and the movie's breathtaking, bittersweet poignancy comes from its recognition that we are who we are because of our experiences.

Wiping the slate clean would cost us dearly, something highlighted in the subplot where Lacuna receptionist and walking Bartlett's quote dispenser Mary (Kirsten Dunst) realises she had an (erased) affair with her middle-aged boss. "The good and bad things are what form us as people," says Winslet. "Change makes us grow. To have one foot in the past, to hang on to the what ifs, to say if I hadn't done that or he hadn't said this... all these things are pointless."

**Dangerous minds:**  
Mary (Kirsten Dunst)  
and Dr. Howard  
Mierzwiak (Tom  
Wilkinson).



Carrey is a revelation. Back in 2004, he was Hollywood's third biggest box office star, breaking records with his \$20m salary for *The Cable Guy* and pulling in hundreds of millions in ticket sales for comedies like *Liar Liar* and *Bruce Almighty*. He waived his fee for *Eternal Sunshine* – just as well really, since it would have doubled the entire production budget – and it's obvious why.

This is Carrey's plum role, the one that'll be on his headstone. *Eternal Sunshine* gave him gravity, a serious role for an unserious man. The star knew how lucky he was: "I had this guilty feeling of like, 'How can I get this one and *The Truman Show*?' Two really interesting, original movies..."

By all accounts, though, it wasn't an easy transition. Kaufman was particularly nervous about the choice. "The first time I met him was the first rehearsal and he came in and he was wearing a hat very similar to [Joel's] and he needed a shave. I had a real sigh of relief when I saw him because I pictured this very rubber-faced, hair thing guy. But he looked like a person,



he looked really cool. Michel [Gondry] and I said afterwards, 'OK, Jim wears no make-up and always needs a shave in this movie.' He agreed to that and I think it does a lot to humanise him. I think he was available throughout the production to try to do the part rather than try to be Jim Carrey."

Carrey's interest was immediately piqued by the material. "It wasn't about memory; it was about being erased. It was about how it would

## CLOSE UP

In today's CGI world, in-camera effects are considered out of fashion, a dated throwback to cinema's mechanical past. Not if you're Michel Gondry, though. "It's really his forte," says Mark Ruffalo of the Frenchman's penchant for using tricks like forced perspective to create his mind-boggling, onscreen memory recreations.

"One of the ways Michel wanted to suggest this visually was by calling back to early cinema, where magicians were using live-action practical effects to change time and space," explains cinematographer Ellen Kuras. "He didn't want them to feel or look completely seamless." Within minutes of shooting, Kuras was being asked to use wheelchairs for dolly shots, shake the camera to show it was handheld and shoot with only natural light.

Gondry's offbeat approach took its toll on the cast, too.

"He comes in and asks you to do things that are impossible," says Carrey. "There's a scene where I come into Lacuna in my memory, and I'm screaming at the doctor, and I'm in two different places in the scene. It's not split screen – it's not any of that – it's Michel coming in and saying: 'You're going to run around ze camera, and you're going to put the hat on and take it off and put it on and take it off!' So, that's me going back and forth behind the handheld camera in the dark with a dresser [doing quick wardrobe tweaks]. It was about how quickly can you run through the dark, get a jacket and a hat on and completely change your attitude. I argued, 'This can't be done. I can't do this. It's impossible.' He said, 'Euh, how do you know if you don't try?' I went back into historical times to the French explorers. 'Yes, I'm on board, Mr Cartier!'"





## 'IT WASN'T A FILM ABOUT MEMORY, IT WAS ABOUT BEING ERASED' JIM CARREY

feel to be erased. That was the strongest pull for me. That's a heavy feeling. That's what hit me with the script. When he finds out that she's erased him, it's just a brutal thing to anybody's ego, but a male ego especially. And I loved the idea that the memories went in reverse. There were so many things that made it different than your normal losing your memory movie." That it came just a couple of weeks after Adam Sandler's *50 First Dates* kind of proved the point.

It takes two to tango, though, and *Eternal Sunshine* would be nothing without Winslet's sour Clementine. Their relationship, possibly one of the screen's least movie-like love affairs, brings with it the emotional connection that propelled the movie onto critics' lists. Changing her mind as often as her hair colour, Clem is one of the screen's least idealised heroines; a brittle, real person (moody, scruffy, sometimes plain unlikeable) who just happens to be in a movie.

"I had to be prepared to let people dislike her at times because she's a bit of a bitch," says Winslet. "But at the same time, she's gorgeous and funny and silly and you sort of feel for her. You kind of sense her confusion about who she is and her life. She's very, very vulnerable, I think, underneath all of that stuff."

### AGENT ORANGE

Michel Gondry worked with Foo Fighters on "Everlong". He shot a promo for "The Hardest Button To Button" for The White Stripes. And for Björk's "Hyper-Ballad" – a song about a woman battling to keep a relationship alive – he asked the Icelandic pixie to play dead and

superimposed a singing hologram on her face. It would be a pretty decent training ground for *Eternal Sunshine*. "It is not such a stretch moving from videos to narrative features," the Frenchman says. "I always saw my videos as little stories, anyway. In one, the story is a palindrome. In another, it is a spiral." Gondry isn't the first pop promo helmer to segue into features – see also Fincher, Jonze, Glazer and, er, McG – but he can claim to be the artiest.

Few films are unique. Most are familiar. *Eternal Sunshine* is a movie that is both at once. If you wanted to you could build a through-line between its amnesiac approach and films as bizarrely diverse as *Memento*, *50 First Dates*, *Paycheck* and true-life doc *Unknown White Male* (Kaufman, who pitched *Eternal Sunshine* before *Memento* was even conceived, had a panic attack when Nolan's film arrived first: "I freaked out when *Memento* opened"). But it's also unlike any of those movies – its bold visual style isn't simply an editing room trick like *Memento*'s breathtaking panache, but something deeper, more resonant.

Its artificial staging has all the fractured logic of a dreamscape, Buñuel meets Brecht. Its influences stretch far and wide: the blurred, molten wax faces of characters as they drop out of Joel's memory look like something from a Chris Cunningham video. Elijah Wood's impossible to turn around back becomes one of those anxious, Freudian dream moments we've all had when the world no longer works the way it should. Joel running from one end of a street to the other, only to find he's where he started is something we can all relate to, the stuff of

nightmares. Best of all is Kaufman's structure, a Möbius strip of trippy *déjà vu* that twists and turns. It's the surreal deal, a movie that discovers in Gondry's direction a perfect index for the fractured lacunae of Kaufman's script.

It shows in Joel's gradual memory erasure as trick shots and trompe-l'oeil staging turn his onscreen memories into wacky journeys through the cerebral cortex. In one scene Joel appears as an adult baby hiding under a table in his PJs while Clem – dressed in a '70s dress and knee-high white boots, flashes him her crotch to try and keep his adult self with her (his response: "Eugh!").

Finally, there's the sequence where Carrey crawls under a duvet, begging not to lose everything ("Please let me keep this memory") as his synapses are zapped. In that moment, the film's melancholy theme of loss goes beyond the script's romcom set-up. It resonates with existential panic. It's as though Gondry has got inside our heads, strewn recognisable fears and experiences out for all to see; making us question our own memories, feelings and moments. And ultimately, leaving the heart-bruising ending open to interpretation. Where do Joel and Clem go from here?

No one, not even Spike Jonze, has translated the scribe's eccentricities onto the screen so brilliantly. It's dementia cinema that stays with you. It's also one of the finest movies of the 21st Century. If it wasn't an insult to its smarts, we'd say it was unforgettable. Instead we'll just have to call it one of the last movies we'd ever want to forget...

# ANATOMY OF A CLASSIC

► RELEASED: 1999 ► RUNTIME: 136 minutes  
► CERTIFICATE: 15 ► DIRECTORS: Larry and Andy Wachowski  
► WRITERS: Larry and Andy Wachowski ► STUDIO: Warner Bros

WORDS DAVE BRADLEY

# THE MATRIX

Time for bullets and a whole lot more from the Wachowskis

## HYPER-REALITY

The post-modern theories of philosophers Umberto Eco and Jean Baudrillard heavily influenced the Wachowskis' thematic approach. "Hyper-reality" concerns our inability to differentiate between authentic substance and the fake symbols of our manufactured world. It's not a huge leap from Disneyland, or the stylised lifestyles portrayed in TV commercials, to a shared virtual illusion like the Matrix. The false book that Thomas Anderson hides his illegal computer discs inside is *Simulacra And Simulation* by Baudrillard, and Morpheus's description of the true Earth as "the desert of the Real" is a direct quote from that book – it refers to a parable in which a genuine landscape withers away while the inhabitants obsess over their giant map instead.



## BULLET TIME

The famous "flow-motion" effect was actually first employed in *Blade* but was perfected by the Wachowskis and their visual effects supervisor John Gaeta for *The Matrix*, and given the name Bullet Time. Although the phrase has been applied to various media, including videogames like *Max Payne*, the term is a registered trademark of Warner Bros. Created by recording the same event simultaneously from slightly different angles using a battery of cameras, then stitching the frames together on a computer and adding a CGI background to hide the paraphernalia, Neo's distinctive dodgeball technique has since been replicated in numerous films and, um, adverts for Center Parcs. It's thought one reason the Wachowskis were so keen on this effect was their fascination with an unusual rotating perspective in the credits of the original *Speed Racer* cartoon.



## I KNOW KUNG FU

For all its posturing, *The Matrix* is essentially a chopsocky action flick. No rapid-fire cutting or reportage-effect shaky-cam gets in the way – the directors allow you to see every blocked punch and every dodged kick. Top Hong Kong stunt specialist Yuen Wo Ping trained actors for months to nail the moves, and even without the wire work or CGI it would still be a gloriously physical movie. The oh-so-handy knack of Neo suddenly being a bare-knuckle expert is justified by the process of uploading information directly into his brain via the computer. Therefore, the abilities are only simulated – they're all respectable combatants inside the Matrix,



not so much in the real world. Watching Neo be "programmed", then slipping into the virtual dojo to demonstrate what he's been taught, is an indisputable highlight.

## SYMBOLISM

There's spiritual meaning hidden everywhere. "Trinity" is first witnessed escaping from room 303, while Thomas Anderson ("The One") lives in apartment 101, which could refer to the torture room of George Orwell's 1984. Anderson calls himself Neo, "the new" in Greek (a "neophyte" in Catholicism is a recent convert or newly ordained priest). And what about that Christian message inherent in Neo's death and resurrection? Which, by the way, takes place in room 303 while Trinity looks on from above: this makes the trinity the beginning and the end of the experience. Some may roll their eyes at all this heavy-handed allegory, but it's rare to find a blockbuster beat-'em-up with so much thought behind every creative choice – it'll keep Media Studies students busy for years.



## STORYTELLING DEVICES

Whatever flaws they may have as directors, the Wachowskis have always attempted to innovate the language of cinema. Each of their movies, including 2008's *Speed Racer*, has pioneered new special effects and unconventional narrative techniques. In addition to Bullet Time and the vibrant martial arts choreography (see above), *The Matrix* is suffused with unusual visual devices. There's a green hue to scenes from the Matrix segments, which leaves everything washed out and artificial. And there's a constant, understated use of reflection running throughout – Trinity watches the agents catch Anderson in the mirror of her bike; Neo sees his choice, red pill or blue pill, shone back at him in Morpheus's sunglasses; the bent spoon reflects the child guru's face; Neo catches himself in the chrome door handle of the Oracle's apartment; and of course he's staring into a cracked mirror at the moment they free his mind.





## CLASSIC DIALOGUE

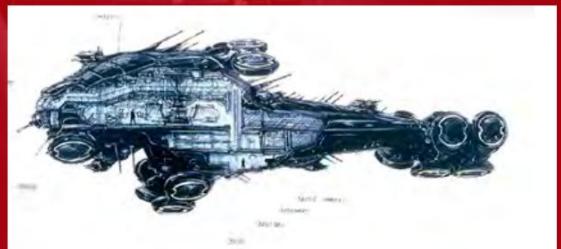
**Morpheus:** "This is your last chance. After this, there is no turning back. You take the blue pill: the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe... whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill: you stay in Wonderland and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes."

## AGENT SMITH

Hugo Weaving's sunglasses-sporting scene-stealer is arguably the strongest candidate for icon status in the movie. He excels as an anti-hero. The tidy 1950s jacket, the sneering mid-American accent, the way he uses Thomas Anderson's full name, even his own deliberately generic handle "Smith" all add up to a figure exploiting our fear of The Man. He's relentless and destructive... but also flawed and (almost sympathetically) a victim of the system just as much as his opponents. "I hate this place," he confesses to Morpheus, temporarily unplugging himself from his communicator. "This zoo. This prison. This reality, whatever you want to call it. I can't stand it any longer." His determination makes him a fitting nemesis for mankind's liberator.



## THE NEBUCHADNEZZAR



Our heroes travel on a battered hovercraft, the Nebuchadnezzar, named after a Biblical ruler. The ship ("made in the USA year 2069" according to its plaque) is a nuts-and-bolts vessel, rusting at the edges after years of service. We love its loose cables and grungy, submarine chic. While advanced by today's standards, the technology on the ship seems held together with gaffer tape and rivets, and we're pretty sure their chairs are recycled dentists' couches. The blue, humming nacelles on the outside of the ship are the only concessions to super-science. The Wachowskis saw a parallel with the verse in which King Nebuchadnezzar says, "I have dreamed a dream; but now that dream is gone from me" (from the book of Daniel).

## NERD RAGE

"Why is this happening to me? What did I do? I'm nobody," mutters Thomas Anderson, as he struggles to flee from his oppressive workplace. The downtrodden geek who has great power thrust upon him is a staple of superhero stories like *Spider-Man* or *The Hulk*, and there's a growing Hollywood genre about a loser's need to fight back against modern life. *Fight Club*, *Falling Down* and *Wanted* all similarly feature office drones,



## TRINITY



If this hadn't been so heavily marketed as a Keanu Reeves vehicle, you might be forgiven for thinking this is Carrie-Anne Moss's movie until many scenes in. No grinning Tinseltown starlet, the female lead in *The Matrix* was 32, Canadian and a relative unknown, playing a hard-faced yet gracefully powerful hacker-cum-warrior. It's the initial battle scene, with the PVC-clad Trinity running around walls to attack a squad of cops before fleeing across the rooftops, that lets you know you're watching something fantastical. For half the film she seems to be the only person who knows what's going on, and let's not forget that Trinity is the only character who successfully kills an agent (shooting Agent Jones in the head at close range). "Dodge this", indeed.

## CLASSIC SCENE: THE LOBBY BATTLE



**1** Neo and Trinity turn up in the lobby armed to their armpits with shotguns and Uzis. The metal detector alarms obviously sound.



**2** Time to go to work. Gunfire, flying plaster, and the pumping sound of The Propellerheads' floorfiller "Spybreak" churn up the air.



**3** The security team lies dead, shell casings clatter to the floor, the walls are crumbling. Neo and Trinity coolly call the elevator.

numbed by their tiresome job and unfulfilling social existence, who get pushed to the edge and discover hidden reserves of aggression. It's an enjoyably subversive fairytale for any pale keyboard slave – not only do these guys possess the hidden ability to smack seven types of stuffing out of bullies and fools, but they're also granted the moral permission to do so.



# Invasion Of The Body Snatchers

The 1970s San Francisco-set take on the Body Snatchers mythos deserves to be remembered as a great film in itself

WORDS JOSEPH McCABE

**M**ention the word “remake” to most people and you’re likely to set their eyes rolling. Double-dips like *The Wicker Man*, *Planet Of The Apes* and Stephen Sommers’s *Mummy* movies prompt the oft-repeated question, “Are there no original ideas in Hollywood?”

Yet there was a time when remakes were not always cause for alarm. When filmmakers went back to the well not only for greenbacks, but inspiration – and sometimes returned with masterpieces. David Cronenberg gave a much-improved take on *The Fly* and John Carpenter’s *The Thing* rivalled Howard Hawks’s original. But the twice-told tale that paved the way for their efforts, that proved a genre movie – like the finest ballad or legend or play – could be told in different ways, was director Philip Kaufman’s 1978 version of

## *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers*.

Rethinking Don Siegel’s simple suburban parable of individuality in the face of ever-encroaching conformity (called either the Red Menace or the Eisenhower administration in the post-war pseudo-paradise of the 1950s) with a more complex examination of the “me generation” at its apex in late-’70s San Francisco, Kaufman gave credence to the old adage that “true originality lies not in saying what’s never been said, but in saying what you have to say.”

Speaking with SFX 30 years after his film gave people reason to once more fear the term “pod people”, Kaufman recalls how he first signed on to rethink a classic.

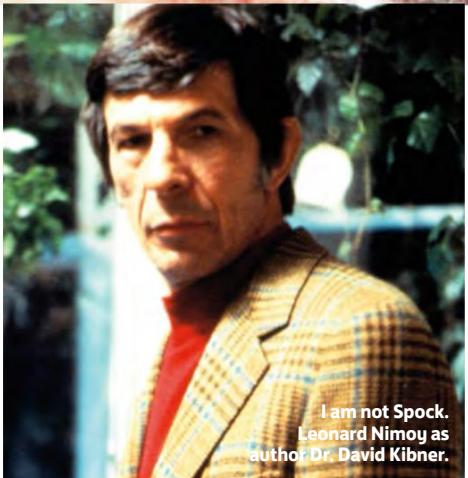
“Part of it,” says Kaufman, fondly, “was that I loved the original. I loved Don Siegel’s thing. Don Siegel was a friend of mine at the

time that I was approached by producer Bob Solo to do it. And I just thought the theme was terrific. Then, going back to the Jack Finney material led me to think that there were other ways of exploring, doing what I came to call a ‘variation of the theme’ instead of a remake. Don’s *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers* was ostensibly a political telling of the McCarthy era. The original Jack Finney novel was much more of a science fiction piece. So I spent about a year working with screenwriter W.D. Richter and Bob Solo trying to figure out how to do that.”

Kaufman says the team was aided by a stop-and-start pre-production period. “Essentially, for the good part of that first year we kept the piece anchored in a small town; I think it was called Santa Maria or something. But then the project was put in turnaround, I think, by



Bennell and Bellicec discover a growing pod person.



I am not Spock.  
Leonard Nimoy as  
author Dr. David Kibner.

Warners. They didn't see anything in it. Then Mike Medavoy, who was then head of Orion or... it might've been United Artists at the time... had been my agent. He said he wanted to do it, and he wanted to get started right away on it. I got excited about making it. It was around that time that I decided that the story was best told not in a small town. In the course of the 20 years that had passed from the original, that paranoia lurked much more in the big cities rather than in the small towns. The idea of pods taking over big cities, particularly San Francisco, the city that I loved... (Jack Finney lived around here too.) Exploring what could happen if... I was gonna say 'aliens,' but they really come as seedlings, or things blown by the wind from another planet, and take hold here, prosper and take over, essentially take over souls - they take over souls and make them soulless. That theme was one that really interested me."

#### SOCIAL THEMES

Kaufman's theme fuelled his film's social commentary, and distinguished it from Siegel's political allegory. Further embellishment, says Kaufman, came with his

**'I had my own surprise ending – I didn't tell anybody how it was going to end'** **PHILIP KAUFMAN**

characters and the sense of humour they brought to his tale.

"In a number of ways, Don's was a McCarthy-era piece, really anchored in that time. It was told as a radio show, in a way, where they have the voice-over, black-and-white. It worked heavily with a narrative line hoping to create that sense of suspense and terror. Whereas what we tried to do was to have modern characters of the time in which we did it, late '60s, early '70s types of characters who were contemporary San Francisco people. In other words, the underlying theme that people can be transformed is one that, obviously, is worth a number of remakes.

"For my money, things are stronger if they're funny, even though there was a lot of terror involved in it, and, yeah, there were people who couldn't see our version of the film because they had heard it was so scary. I think one of the most insightful reviews was by Pauline Kael who largely viewed it as a comedy, appreciated the humour that was built into it - the ironies and the jaunty style that we tried to do it in. The original had no humour at all, and was lacking in that kind of warmth that the '60s and '70s was so proud of."

Kaufman also saw in his version the chance to correct the original's studio-imposed ending, in which Miles Bennell (played by Kevin McCarthy) finds his story of space invaders confirmed, and the Earth, presumably, saved.

"We started getting to work on it at one end of Don Siegel's office, and I was saying, 'I'm thinking about doing a remake.' Right as we were talking, who should pop in but Kevin McCarthy who happened to be doing another movie on the lot. The three of us sat down and had a long talk about it. They were upset with the idea that the ending they had wanted was tampered with. It didn't have the stark ending they were going for. The studios made them put out a little tag that essentially said that

'Well, the FBI's into it, and everything's going to be taken care of, and the pods are going to be taken care of.' I said, 'Well, we're going to do something where that isn't the case.' Because it's much more

relevant and much more interesting and much more fun if the pods are able to continue their organic journey beyond San Francisco into American society. So both Don and Kevin loved that idea and they signed up right away to be in the movie. And Kevin symbolised that idea of moving from the small town to the big city."

#### ON THE RUN

"Essentially, in my mind, he has run for 20 years from the original version, saying, 'They're here!' At one point, he crashes into Donald Sutherland and Brooke Adams's car to deliver the message, and for his trouble, he gets sort of killed in the big city. The message is delivered, but not necessarily understood by our actors now 20 years later. But it was the way of delivering the original theme into our movie played by the same actor."

Sutherland and Adams, the film's nominal stars, played health inspectors who stumble upon the film's titular invasion. They're joined by a then up-and-coming Jeff Goldblum and *Alien*'s Veronica Cartwright, both of whom would again work with Kaufman on *The Right Stuff*. An additional supporting role slyly went to everyone's favourite alien, Leonard Nimoy, cast as a bestselling author of self-help books.

"I'd met Leonard Nimoy when I spent about a year trying to get the first *Star Trek* movie going, but it had fallen apart; my version of *Star Trek* featured Spock as the centrepiece. That's how I got to know Leonard, and I really wanted to work with him. Brooke Adams I'd mainly seen in *Days Of Heaven*. That was essentially the cast... Jeff Goldblum, Veronica Cartwright. Nobody knew how it was going to end. I had my own surprise ending and I didn't tell anybody. I didn't tell Richter, Solo, or anybody until the day before we were about to shoot it. Then I brought Donald in, told him how I was going to end it. He loved that idea. The studio didn't see the ending until they finally saw the movie. They had no idea how it was going to end. It was months later that the studio got to see how the movie was going to be finished."

The film's gut-punch twist of an ending would prove darker than the original's, reflecting the post-Watergate, post-Vietnam war period in which it was made. It made Kaufman's film unique among the many escapist fantasies popular at the time, among them *Star Wars*, *Superman* and *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*. Unsurprisingly, Kaufman's film wasn't a blockbuster hit like these, but it performed respectably, and earned critical praise. And it was successful enough to earn perhaps the ultimate accolade - further remakes. The latest is *The Invasion*. Kaufman sees it as further proof of the timeless appeal Jack Finney's tale has for each generation.

"I didn't see the one that came out later [Abel Ferrara's *Body Snatchers*]. I'd never gone to see it. I had my say on the subject, and I was always eager to move on to other thoughts. But I think the idea of people turning into pods is something we have to be aware of all the time. I think there are lots of variations on that theme that can be done."

WORDS KEVIN HARLEY

# THE TRUMAN

Sixteen years after his cheery release into reality, we revisit the sun-dappled world of Truman Burbank...

**W**ho put the “true” in *The Truman Show*? Screenwriter Andrew Niccol certainly wanted to. “The question I’m most often asked about *The Truman Show*,” he wrote in the introduction to his screenplay, “is how I came to write it.

“It is because,” he added, “I suspect it is true.”

Run with this. *Truman* might not be Shakespeare, but it is genuine. Sort of. Remember, 1998 was the year of *Godzilla*, *Armageddon*, *The Avengers*, *Deep Impact* and *Lost In Space*, good reasons to be tired of “phoney emotions, bored of pyrotechnics and special effects”. We needed a story to give hope to millions. Hope of finding smarter, better company for our nights in the dark besides lizards and rocks. Little wonder Truman’s travails clicked with audiences.

*The Truman Show* looks even more clued in to the real world 16 years later, pairing its window on to the human condition with the mirror that it holds up to the world we were starting to inhabit. In many ways, the film courts conviction by teasing reality effects into an outlandish near-future satire. As the show’s creator Christof said, sort of, that’s what makes it so great to watch...

“It’s like making a film about a painter,” says director Peter Weir, chatting cheerily with *Total Film* from his native Australia. “Say you invent

someone and you’re saying he’s a famous painter and his work is admired. You then have the really difficult task of getting the audience to believe in it, because you’ve got to have his paintings. Unless you believe that *The Truman Show* could exist and that people could watch it, the movie wouldn’t work. So I was making two things: a television programme within a film.”

## MAN ABOUT TOWN

For those who don’t know, the moon-high show-within-a-film concept plays like this: Truman Burbank is an insurance salesman who’s living in the blissful/nightmarish white-picket fantasy-town of Seahaven. He thinks there’s more to his life than meets the eye. Something’s cooking and it’s not just his wife Meryl’s macaroni. Something’s planned for him and, when he finds out, things will never be the same.

We’ve all had these fantasies. Eyeballed the mirror, played spaceman. But when a chunk of lighting rig nearly brains Truman on his way to work, his thoughts begin to curl.

We realise Truman is actually a prisoner: the unwitting “star” of a 30-year-old worldwide reality TV-show smash. How will it end? Tune in...

Soon after the initial conception of *Truman* by Niccol, the script seed swam over to ace

# SHOW

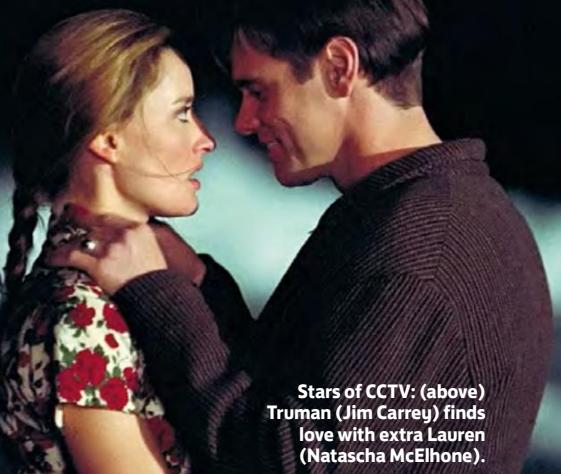


producer Scott Rudin, who adopted the fragile charge for \$1m and apparently fended off interest from "inappropriate" directors such as Steven Spielberg. Meanwhile, Weir was looking for a challenge. His career had temporarily nose-dived with *Fearless*, a fine film that didn't find its audience. Happily, the helmer of *Witness*, *Dead Poets Society* and *Gallipoli* loved *The Truman Show* from the moment of insemination. "I thought it was fun, just wonderful satire. And I enjoy that form of writing. I remember thinking, 'Who is this Andrew Niccol? What a wonderfully written piece.'"

Still, work had to be done. The film's star-to-be, Jim Carrey, was tuned into *The Cable Guy* at the time. Fittingly, this gave Niccol and Weir a nine-month gestation period for *Truman* – time the pair spent anchoring the tale's choppy waters of mock-fact and fancy in a smoothly persuasive surface.

First three changes? Location, location, location. Niccol's *Show* was set in New York and focused on an alcoholic. But experience gave Weir the confidence to spy a problem: "I had to have a show that the world would watch and I just didn't think they'd watch

>>



Stars of CCTV: (above) Truman (Jim Carrey) finds love with extra Lauren (Natascha McElhone).



Andrew's." He used the sunshine-soap *Home And Away* as his template, but then his wife gave him a magazine featuring a report on the purpose-built US town of Seaside: "So I went there first on the survey and I said to everybody, 'Unpack your bags, this is it...'"

Weir also fleshed out the show's history and its creator's back story, as well as details such as the marketing of a "TV crib" – a flat telly in the cot, so fans could watch Truman's baby years – and the "Trashcancam" wielded by a neighbour. Thus, *Truman* began to take shape.

#### CARREY REINVENTED

If one thing could sink it, though, it was the wrong lead. Jim Carrey? Could've been a lead weight. Weir had seen Carrey gurning in *Ace Ventura* and thought him "an extraordinary talent". But could a guy who made his name from playing characters that talked out of their butts, a guy who had proved adept at cracking jokes about how their cock was hanging, be effectively cast as the nice, sensible star of a long-running real-life soap?

Star and director's strong wills could have clashed, too, but the actor-sensitive Weir had already directed Robin Williams, Harrison Ford and Mel Gibson. Knowing how to work tricky leads, he gave Carrey rope to swing on before

pulling him in. "Peter encouraged me to be creative," Carrey reckons. "I wasn't afraid to bring things to him, once I knew he'd listen and not just sigh. We did lots of takes where I'd make mad lunges and throw everything there. A lot of it didn't get used. But Peter would say that because we'd done it, it'd be in the film – in my eyes and my mind."

Some critics complained that Carrey still occupied the outer realms of performance, amplifying his star-wattage for the camera. But even this cleaved to the reality effect Weir wanted. "We discussed that and thought it was right," says Weir. "It's what we call to be 'on', isn't it? 'Hey, how are ya! What a nice day!' There is that particular way of being, perhaps more in America. It's a personality type, someone who's perpetually 'on' and cheerful and self-conscious."

Carrey had real roots for these mannerisms. "Truman is an extension of myself and especially my father. If the world was caving in, my father would be like: 'Don't worry, everything's OK.' I learned a bit about how to express myself from that. I love and respect my father, but I saw it as a form of cowardice at times, of dishonesty. He was a sensitive guy who didn't want to hurt anybody. It wasn't good enough for him to say 'Good morning' to people, he wanted to make sure they were happy the whole day, which is where Truman's catchphrase comes from: 'Good morning. And in case I don't see ya, good afternoon, good evening and good night.'"

"We worked backwards, thinking about this," explains Weir. "At the end of the show, if you look at the last couple of shots when Truman's talking to the producer in the studio, he's like, 'Ah, so that's what it all was! That's why I felt like that! I had cameras on me. I didn't know I was being photographed but like an animal, I instinctively felt like I had to be something, to be nice and interesting.' Picking up direction through the air. So the critic was right... but it was planned."

Rather than sinking the movie, Carrey's passion for improvisations caught Weir's wind. Remember the mirror scene, in which Truman

offers a chirpy kind of variation on the mirror scene of another TB, Travis Bickle? One of Jim's many contributions. Incidentally, given the two films' reflective-opposites themes of self and public perception in a celeb-driven culture, *The Truman Show* does have shades of some parallel-universe *Taxi Driver* remix...

"I said to Jim, 'I'm going to tell you where some cameras will be in my thinking as the director of the show. I think you would have one in your bathroom because you stare straight into the lens when you shave and all that,'" remembers Weir. "And Jim said, 'Yeah and I could draw on the bathroom mirror!' One time, before pre-production, I went round to Jim's house for dinner... He'd drawn a spaceman or something on the mirror and he ad-libbed this thing and I wrote down what he said. Then he said, 'I've got some other ones,' and just drew on. You couldn't stop him by that point!"

#### PROPHETIC OR PARABLE?

All this served to anchor *Truman* in the power of audience persuasion. This was Weir's first priority: subtextual intrigue and self-consciousness took second place to sturdy storytelling. "I'm not a propagandist or a preacher who hides the pill inside the lovely story," he says. "I just thought this was probably the most unique escape story I'd ever read. I approached it as an escape story about a man who's in a prison but doesn't know he's in a prison. It's like a riddle: if a man is in prison and doesn't know it, how is that possible? Answer: he was born in prison."

Shades of Patrick McGoohan, there. Fittingly, given *The Truman Show*'s subject, TV provides a wellspring of reference points for the movie, among them shows such as *The Prisoner* and *The Twilight Zone*. Themes of paranoia and conspiracy also carried over from *The X-Files*. But at the root of these influences sits a set of fears as old as fiction. Think Hamlet, another character convinced he's the real one in a world of dissemblance. In this sense, *Truman* is a timeless fable about the boundaries of our worlds. Existential, like. "I think these are themes we all identify with," says Carrey. "Everybody at some point in life has thought, 'What if I was the only real person and everybody was just messing with me and everybody was just actors in my play?'"

Weir agrees. "There's an idea that we have somewhere that's a very old idea," he says, "that the people around you, your parents I suppose, could be the agents of something

awful. A version of the 'Am I adopted?' story might be 'Is all of this real?'

*Truman* went on to pepper this story-base with contemporary resonances. As early as 1998, a student was documenting her daily life through the JenniCam website. In the early '90s, a precedent existed for a series in which people go about their everyday life: Manchester spawned a monster called *The Living Soap*. Increasingly, too, we were living our lives on camera, a facet deliciously satirised by the hidden cameras in the film. Watch that pencil sharpener! "CCTV was booming," says Weir. "You didn't have to be a prophet to realise that we were going to be photographed more often by these cameras. That idea was there to be used, it was just a case of concealing the cameras."

Even if prophecy was never Weir's intent, it became the happy and unhappy legacy of the film: happily for its wider cultural resonances, not so happily for the quality of our TV.

"Our idea was to take an idea to the max," says Weir. "It's satire, after all. And it's 'prophecy' that is the warning about the future, not satire. Look at Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*: you don't really think an island like that will be discovered with all those people. *Truman* did keep playing games in my mind, though. I'd pick up a paper, read all about the latest media violation and I'd think, 'How like *The Truman Show* that is.'"

And so those similarities grew. On theatrical release, a few critics balked at the idea of telly addicts tuning in to the banality of one man's life. How patronising, went the argument: as if audiences are that stupid! But these critics had yet to endure *Big Brother*. Or z-listers eating bugs on once-a-celebrity island. Expanded digital

## CLOSE UP



Peter Weir spent the majority of pre-production expanding on Truman's world, as well as those of his creator and co-stars. "In doing so," he says, "I became so immersed that I was able to handle the dangerous questions of logic in the story..."

Thus, Christof had won an Oscar for a documentary about street people, *Show Me The Way To Go Home*. He first pitched the *Truman* project to the OmniCam Corporation in a show called *Bringing Up Baby*, in which a baby bottle carried a concealed camera in its teat. Truman's wife was Hannah Gill, a former child actor who netted an extra \$10,000 every time she slept with her screen spouse. Marlon was Louis Coltrane, an actor who turned to drugs to dilute his guilt over deceiving his buddy.

And Dad? Walter Moore brought much conviction to the father-son reunion. "Walter later received an Emmy for this episode," Weir wrote in his forward to Niccol's published screenplay, "awarded under controversial circumstances since Walter had admitted to the press that he had not been acting that evening, the emotion was genuine..."

distribution networks since the film's release shoved the movie even further into the realms of plausibility, too.

The late '90s/early '00s media heat cooked up over celebrities makes *Truman* look like the retrospective harbinger of a new age. In part, Carrey head-charged the story from the angle of the hassled star. "I've brought family pictures to Fotomat and had them end up in newspapers. Sold from the photo-processing lab. People are like, 'You can't arrest me, you can't sue me so because you're famous I'm going to make you feel like crap.' But I never signed anything that said I wasn't actually a human being any more..."

"There are times when I feel something and look round, wondering if I'm on camera. And my friends are like, 'Settle down, you're fine.' And five minutes later we're wrestling with a camera crew to get back into a car because I was right... It was something I identified with."

Did *Truman* tap into the movies' hunger to feed on real life, too? Carrey thought so. "It's against cinema, too. Every disaster has a movie attached to it, there's always talk of the movie rights to somebody's story. I'm sure they'll do the Mark David Chapman story some day." Consider it done – see *The Killing Of John Lennon*. Or rather, don't. Carrey's crystal ball saw it all for you.

## HOW'S IT GOING TO END?

"I did more cuts of this movie than anything I've done before," says Weir. "I wasn't going to get any thanks for coming close to getting it right. It had to work flawlessly within its own logic or it was over..."

Weir and Co pulled off a miraculous balancing act, turning a potentially heady stew of satire and media mockery into a slick, affecting, provocative mainstream yarn. And despite Paramount's alleged anxieties about it being too arty for a \$60m film, *Truman* made \$264m worldwide. Clearly it had the storytelling savvy to hook an audience and the foresight to talk to its era.

One thing bugs us, though. Remember the *Truman Show* promotional badges? Well, then. How is it going to end? Ten years ago, Truman

stepped out of Seahaven, into reality. The perfect ending to the perfect semi-life. But where is he now?

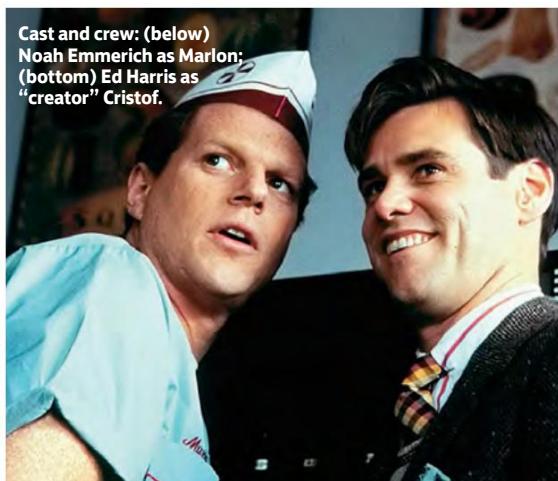
"I think when you begin to speculate, it becomes less interesting," argues Weir. "It's fitting in a way that he steps through a door and disappears. He would never reach that level of celebrity again. It was just a freak. There's nothing worse than somebody who once was very famous talking about it. It's embarrassing."

No, but seriously. Where is Truman? "Where would Truman go if he gets out?" muses Carrey. "He's the most famous person in the world. He could end up going back into the TV show just to get some peace!"

"Whatever Happened To Truman?" articles would appear," Weir reckons. "With the rise of celebrity, the Paris Hilton age, he'd have to come to terms with it.

"He would perhaps have an adviser of some kind who says, 'If you don't do something you're going to get hounded.' He'd probably write a book or go on *Oprah*. I'd prefer to think he was sighted here and there but became more of a sort of Howard Hughes figure, with reports of him being seen in Las Vegas or Machu Picchu or somewhere. 'I swear it was him!' Then other people would claim to be him and have DNA tests and things...."

In other words, the "true man" is out there somewhere. Do you believe?



Cast and crew: (below) Noah Emmerich as Marlon; (bottom) Ed Harris as "creator" Cristof.



WORDS CALUM WADDELL

# DONNIE DARKO

The mad world story of bunny rabbit costumed crazies, wasted adolescence and Armageddon fuelled prophecies, *Donnie Darko* is one of a kind

Let anyone tell you otherwise there is an unpredictable, and totally accidental, art to making a cult film. Take a look at some of the contemporary clunkers that have tried oh so hard to capture an audience of alternative cinema junkies – from the redundant *Rocky Horror* wannabe *Repo: The Genetic Opera* to the ill-advised cartoon carnage of *Speed Racer*, these are outings that desperately, painfully, want to be “chic”. Alas, they never did inspire the imagination of a collective craze and are, ultimately, largely forgotten about – unfit to be listed alongside such certified cult classics as *Plan 9 From Outer Space*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Evil Dead* and, of course, *Donnie Darko*.

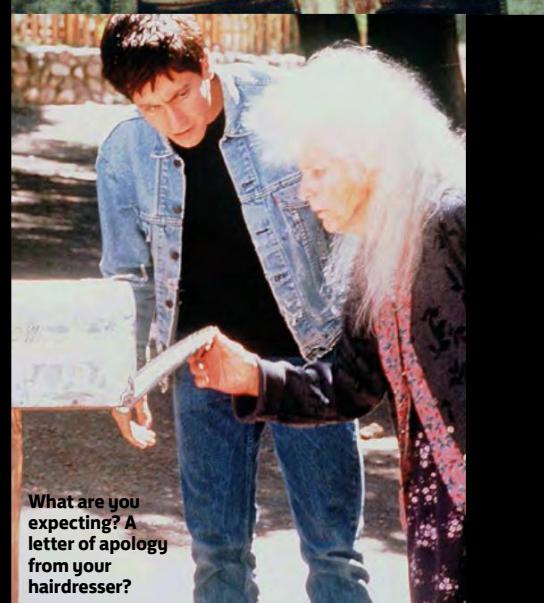
You see, what each of these titles has in common is simple: the people behind them never set out to achieve cult superstardom. Instead, each respective filmmaker (yes, even Ed Wood) was opting to make the most of their talents and hoping for a box office bonanza at the end of it. Yet, in each case, a devoted pack of film fanatics opted to dress like the onscreen characters, recite the screenplay religiously, pack out retrospective midnight screenings and swallow up home video reissue after home video reissue.

That is the true sign of a cult juggernaut... and if *Donnie Darko* director Richard Kelly seems nonplussed at this after-the-fact fan appreciation then it's only because he was hoping for far, far more from his delirious debut outing.

“We had high hopes for *Donnie Darko*,” he begins when we sit down with him. “People often forget that it was picked as a Sundance film, which fills you with all sorts of confidence. But it came out and basically flopped. Then it got this second wind on DVD. That was when I began to hear the ‘cult’ label



Donnie (Jake Gyllenhaal) has visions of Frank, a demonic-looking rabbit.



attached to it, which was never my hope for the film. However, I have learned to deal with it, even though it is not my favourite word. Besides, I've seen my movies called a lot worse [laughs]."

A near-impossible to describe time-fracturing fantasy, *Donnie Darko* introduces us to Jake Gyllenhaal as the titular high school student with visions of a ghostly figure in a bunny rabbit costume. Exactly what this prophetic contact means is not explained until the final dwindling, disturbing moments – and the trip getting there is superbly surreal, taking in everything from Patrick Swayze as a paedophile motivational speaker to a group of students partying to no less sombre a soundtrack than "Love Will Tear Us Apart" by Joy Division. Set in 1988, Kelly's freaky fable works as an allegory for the times, a pessimistic

up to me and telling me the movie sucked – and you can imagine how that felt. That was the start of some pretty scathing reviews as well – mainly a lot of critics who claimed it didn't make any sense. We were heartbroken because, being my first film, you hope the world will love you. Thankfully, it got that second wind and people began to warm to it. I think that validated my original intention, which was to tell this thought-provoking, and deeply layered, science fiction story that would really resonate with an intelligent genre audience."

#### FIRST OF A TRIO

Now seen in the context of Kelly's other work, which includes 2006's *Southland Tales* and 2009's *The Box*, *Donnie Darko* can also be viewed as the start of a trilogy that casts America's culture of corporate consumerism as

the ultimate filmic villain. Indeed, both youth and adults alike are, ultimately, destroyed by a hopeless future in all three efforts.

"Yeah, that is very true. You can

probably tell how specific the era is to each movie too: *Donnie Darko* really had to be set in the 1980s and *The Box* was a story that needed to take place in the 1970s, just as America was changing from the 'darkness' of Nixon to the more liberal Jimmy Carter. I would also say that *Donnie Darko* and *The Box*, especially, are very specific suburban movies. I think I just like to see people who live cosy lives in a nice suburbia in crisis. *Donnie Darko* was also an emotionally draining film to do – right down to getting that period in the 1980s just right, finding the correct cast and also

**'It came out and basically flopped. Then it got this second wind on DVD'**

**RICHARD KELLY, DIRECTOR**

look at American youth and as a thinking person's sci-fi film. In light of this, then, the timing of the release could not have been worse.

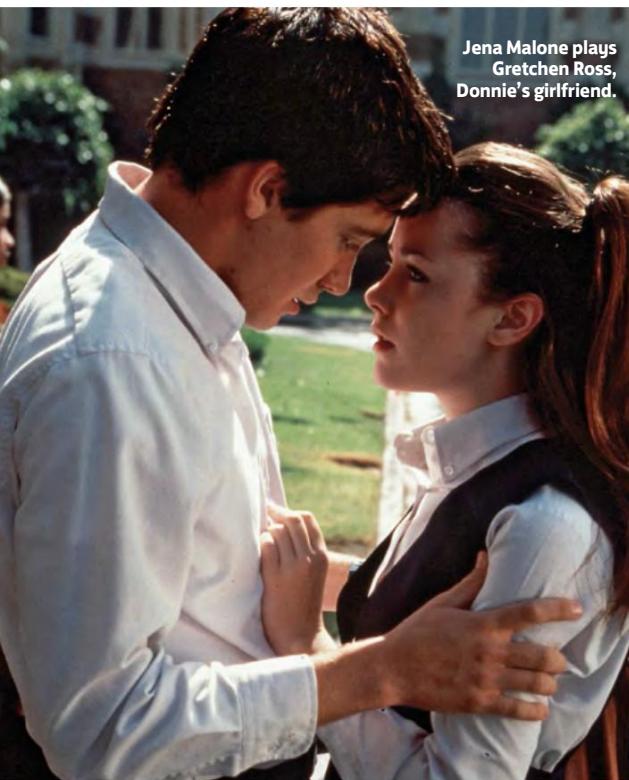
"They initially put it out in cinemas shortly after September 11th happened," bemoans the director. "I really don't think it was the sort of movie that captured the mood of the country back then. But at that point I was expecting the worst anyway [laughs]. When we premiered it at Sundance in January it was a huge disaster. It was really difficult being there because nobody seemed to like it. Everyone was coming

trying to tell a very contained story."

However, perhaps the most enduring element of the *Donnie Darko* legacy is not its impressive ensemble cast (which also includes Drew Barrymore – cast against type as a nerdy, unattractive schoolteacher!) or the haunting image of James Duval in a battered bunny costume. Rather it's the soundtrack's melancholy rendering of erstwhile pop hit "Mad World". Originally composed by '80s favourites Tears For Fears, *Donnie Darko* features a funereally paced cover version by American singer Gary Jules. To the shock of just about everyone, this shot to the top of the UK Christmas charts back in 2003.

"I am really proud of that song," smiles Kelly. "We recorded it with Gary Jules in 2000 – just before we finished the movie. It all happened in a few hours and it was >>>

# DONNIE DARKO



Jena Malone plays  
Gretchen Ross,  
Donnie's girlfriend.



By the time he got  
home he was just a  
bag of bones...

actually Gary's idea to do it. I never expected anything from it but I am really happy that it went so far. I still hear it on the radio or when I hop into a taxi. I love that. How can you not?

"I know that it annoys some people but I think 'Mad World' is a really haunting song," maintains the director. "I like the original Tears For Fears song too and I'm just glad that I helped to re-introduce it to people. Besides, it's

one of the few really successful things that I'm associated with. Usually my stuff gets the word 'cult' attached to it – which often makes me grit my teeth because it means people are writing about them after-the-fact rather than when they are first out. So to have 'number one hit' next to my name is great. Even if I never actually sang 'Mad World' [laughs]."

## UNNECESSARY SEQUEL

Perhaps the greatest evidence of *Donnie Darko*'s eventual move from fully fledged flop to widely accepted cult classic was the announcement that, yes, there would be a much-belated sequel. Arguably the most unwanted, not to mention unexpected, follow-up since the last entry into the *Big Momma's House* franchise, 2009's certified stinker *S Darko* focused on the plight of Donnie's sister (played by Daveigh Chase in both Kelly's original and its successor) and bypassed a theatrical release entirely, sinking directly to DVD. Somewhat inevitably, the reviews were far from enthusiastic and, unlike the first film, one suspects that a cult reappraisal is unlikely to come anytime soon. Moreover, the very mention of the film sends Kelly into a furious rant.

"That entire thing with the sequel really pissed me off," he fumes. "I thought it was a stupid idea from the start. I have never seen *S Darko* and I will never see it... Originally I was slightly curious and I asked a few fans and colleagues if it was any good. Not one of them told me that it was. Surely that tells you something?"

Furthermore, Kelly insists that it was never in his interest to continue the *Darko* mythology beyond his "definitive" director's cut, which was issued in 2004.

"I did know that they were going to do a sequel. I had no control over the property and I begged the people behind it not to do it. I was even on the phone saying to them 'Guys, this is not necessary – there is no need to continue this story.' But by that time *Donnie Darko* was this big cult thing and they wanted to make some easy money so what can you do? When that is someone's motivation there is no talking them out of it. I was so upset when I began to see the posters for it. They were just doing a cheap cash-in as far as I was concerned. I mean, just think: the money they spent on the sequel could have been spent on a new hardcore porn movie. At least then it would have gone to something useful [laughs]. Maybe we could have seen a hardcore version of *Donnie Darko* – I'd even pay to watch that. But not a sequel... I will never watch that film and it doesn't exist in my mind. It is not authorised by me. Seriously – I would urge anyone out there who is reading this article and is even the slightest bit curious to spend their money on some good porn DVDs instead."

Over a decade later, then, and it's clear that Kelly's first feature still remains very close to his heart. When asked what the trials and tribulations of *Donnie Darko* taught him, he's refreshingly forthright.

"It made me realise that you can never predict what will catch on with an audience," he replies. "Now I can never predict who I am making a movie for – and that is all down to the *Donnie Darko* experience. It also gave me the chance to work in a genre that I really love. However, I'm going to take a break from sci-fi for a little while. It is exhausting and, although I love the genre, as the whole *Donnie Darko* thing taught me – it can really drive you mad [laughs]."

## FOLLOWING UP A FLOP FAVOURITE



When *Donnie Darko* began to hit pay dirt on DVD, Richard Kelly was suddenly pegged as a "name to watch". The result was a bigger budget for 2006's would-be blockbuster *Southland Tales*, a film that promptly sank at the box office and achieved catastrophic critical notices. Kelly, however, remains steadfast about his second feature.

"I think time will be kind to *Southland Tales*," he insists. "As with *Donnie Darko*, I don't think people really got it when it first came out. *Southland Tales* is a reflection of my time in Los Angeles and my absurd view of the city. It is also a very aggressive – and intentionally vulgar – response to the War on Terror, as well as the political discourse in America. The cable news networks in America are so polarising and nasty and ridiculous. Like how can anyone take Fox News seriously? And you know what really pissed me off? People said *Southland Tales* was too absurd. Well, the stuff that is happening in the US right now, on television, is far more ridiculous than anything in *Southland Tales*."



**'I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THE FILM WOULD LOOK LIKE AT ALL'**

Yep mister, that really is one of the most famous actresses in the world.

# Under The Skin

Scarlett Johansson talks about playing the seductress alien in Jonathan Glazer's unique film

WORDS JAMES MOTTRAM

**Under The Skin** has really polarised the critics. Are you surprised at that?

I think Jonathan's work in general is pretty polarising. One of the things I adore about Jonathan is he says "I make movies that I want to make. I make movies that I want to see." That's why he takes seven or ten years to make movies... he's a true artist in that way.

**Was this really an exploration between the pair of you?**

For sure... sometimes the two of us would spend half a day not being able to find the key for the lock. We'd sit there

in silence and Jonathan would go "Well, that's not working" and then go "OK, I have an idea. Don't say anything, let me try this other thing." And sometimes that would be the right path.

**Your character seduces a lot of men – played largely by non-professional actors. Were these guys intimidated to meet you?**

Yeah, but it kind of works. These characters that I'm picking up are these forgotten guys – they don't have any ties. They're not like the coolest kid in school. So the guys I was working with, it helped [their

performance] that they'd be like "I can't believe I'm sitting next to you."

**What was it like when you first saw it?**

It was strange. I felt really anxious. I didn't know what the film would look like at all. As I watched it – because I didn't have any pre-conceived idea of what it would be – I tried to watch it as an audience member. And it pulled me into it.

**What about shooting in Scotland – did you try any delicacies?**

I don't eat red meat, so I tried the vegetarian haggis. It tasted like stuffing. And Irn-Bru – that's got a kick!

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• WORDS WILL SALMON • ILLUSTRATIONS PAUL CEMMICK



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## THE FIGHTIN' FAMILY! THE FANTASTIC FOUR (OPENS 6 AUGUST)

Fans often complain that remakes are coming faster and faster, but this one really has arrived at super-speed. The last *Fantastic Four* film – *Rise Of The Silver Surfer* – was a mere seven years ago. Still, even then there was a definite sense that the FF franchise was a mismatched bantam going up against the likes of Nolan's heavyweight *Batman Begins*. Now, with Marvel rewriting blockbuster rulebooks, Fox is clearly keen to give the first family of superheroes another shot at the big time.

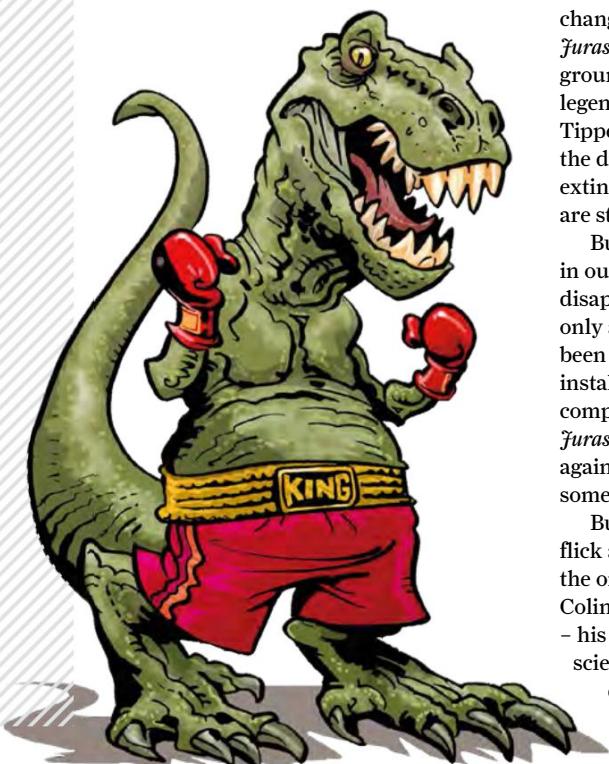
Will it work? The omens are good. Director Josh Trank has form, with his *Chronicle* being an excellent blend of the found-footage and superhero genres. A slightly darker tone is likely (not always a good thing, but given that the first two movies had about as much gravitas as an episode of *Balamory*, very welcome here). Most intriguingly of all, it's rumoured to tie-in, somehow, to Fox's successful *X-Men* franchise.

Still, it's a bit of a gamble. The FF launched the Marvel comics universe but



they've never had the everyday brand recognition of the bigger superhero properties. Possibly with that in mind, Marvel put back the film's opening – it was originally set to go up against the multi-fanged attack of *Jurassic World*...

## PREHISTORIC PRIZE-FIGHTER! JURASSIC WORLD (OPENS 12 JUNE)



Few films can legitimately claim to have changed an entire industry, but the original *Jurassic Park* did just that. Its groundbreaking CG effects caused legendary stopmotion animator Phil Tippett [who was initially hired to create the dinosaurs] to exclaim, "I think I'm extinct", and the ripples of those raptors are still being felt today.

But is there still a place for *Jurassic Park* in our multiplexes? *The Lost World* was a disappointing sequel, and the third film only a little better. More to the point, it's been a long 13 years since that last instalment. Just being able to create realistic computer monsters is no longer enough. If *Jurassic World* is going to stand a chance against its competitors, then it has to be something really special.

But there's still a lot of love for that first flick and, wisely, this is set to be a sequel to the original trilogy, not a reboot. Director Colin Trevorrow is an intriguing choice – his cute, culty *Safety Not Guaranteed* mixed science fiction with everyday romance in a distinctly Spielbergian manner. We think *Jurassic World* has the makings of a big hit.

## POST-APOCALYPTIC COP! MAD MAX: FURY ROAD (OPENS 15 MAY)

Where would a fight be without a plucky underdog? The return of post-apocalyptic policeman Max Rockatansky after a 30-year absence makes him one of the most intriguing of the year's contenders.

That said, it's a risk – particularly given that this is a reboot (insert knee-jerk boos and hisses) and fans still hold a lot of love for the original trilogy. There's also the worry that the *Mad Max* concept is a dated one, fundamentally rooted in the '70s/'80s. After so long, do people still care?

Then again, original director and co-creator George Miller is in the director's seat. If anyone knows what makes this franchise tick then it's surely him. Tom Hardy has a sizeable fan following, and casting him in Mel Gibson's original role is a canny choice indeed. He's got the requisite mix of charm and toughness to pull it off.

Max's biggest competition is likely to come from the mighty Avengers. *Fury Road* opens just two weeks after *Avengers: Age Of Ultron*. Sure, most of the hardcore fans will have already seen Marvel's epic by then, but it'll no doubt still be

drawing in casual filmgoers. What *Fury Road* needs is good feedback and old-fashioned word of mouth to convince undecided punters.



## THE CYBORG KILLER! TERMINATOR: GENISYS (OPENS 3 JULY)

When Michael Biehn said of the original *Terminator* "it absolutely will not stop", little did he know how prophetic those words would be. 2009's *Terminator Salvation* may have been a critical misfire, but it did decent money at the box office, so a fifth instalment was guaranteed.

That doesn't mean it's been smooth sailing, however, with the Halcyon Company going bankrupt and financial backers Annapurna Pictures pulling out. More to the point, do people still care about the Connor saga?

Still, *Genisys* is intended as a fresh start – if not, by the sounds of things, a straight reboot. Alan Taylor (*Game Of Thrones*/*Thor: The Dark World*) is, in every sense, a better director than McG. Emilia Clarke is stepping into Sarah Connor's shoes. And with Arnie once more on board and talk of a spin-off TV series in the works, it's clear that there's effort being made to restore some dignity to the franchise.

Consider this series down, but not yet out.



## THE MICROSCOPIC MARVEL! ANT-MAN (OPENS 17 JULY)

More quirky superheroics come in Marvel's first "Phase Three" flick. *Ant-Man* follows the adventures of Scott Lang, a thief-turned-crimefighter who can change his size at will, thanks to tech invented by scientist (and superhero) Dr. Hank Pym.

The film has been in development for years, but the first real movement came in 2006 when Marvel hired *Spaced*/*Cornetto* trilogy director Edgar Wright. Sadly, the British director left the project early this year. Onward it trundles though, and Paul Rudd will play Lang, while Michael Douglas will be lending some starpower to the role of Pym.

With *Iron Man 4* seemingly out of the question, there's a gap in Marvel's schedule for a smart-ass hero using science and wit to fight evil. But will Rudd look like an ant-sized also-ran in comparison to Robert Downey Jr.'s bearded billionaire? And given that the film is opening just two months after *Age Of Ultron*, will audiences be suffering from super-fatigue? That would be painfully ironic.

All that said, we have faith, and Marvel's willingness to try out lesser known characters on the big screen is to be applauded. And maybe, after the big (potentially bloated) *Age Of Ultron*, a back-to-basics superhero origin story is exactly what's needed.



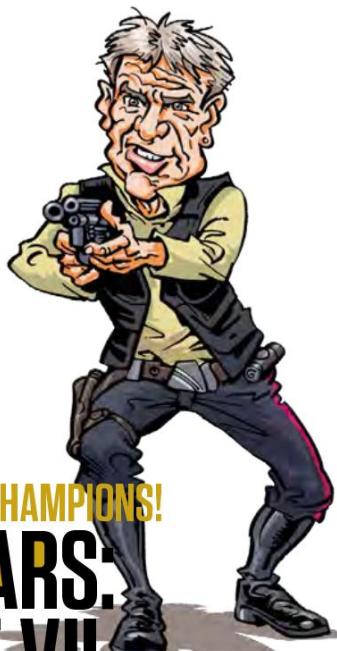
## THE RETURNING CHAMPIONS! STAR WARS: EPISODE VII (OPENS 18 DECEMBER)

This is the big one. If there's a franchise that has the heavyweight potential to deliver a solid KO to all-comers in 2015, then it's *Star Wars*. Make no mistake – there will not be a more hotly anticipated movie for the rest of the decade. The fact that J.J. Abrams is at the helm only adds to the excitement.

What do we know about *The Force Awakens*? Not much yet. It takes place after *Return Of The Jedi*. Original icons Han, Luke and Leia are returning – rumour has it that the latest retooling of the script features them very prominently indeed – as are a new, younger generation of heroes. And not much else.

Is it going to be a hit? Do Ewoks shit in the woods? It's *Star Wars* – the grandaddy of blockbusters, and the franchise (still) with the most untapped sequel potential. The only thing standing in its way is the residual badwill hangover from those three disappointing prequels.

But, hey, it's the original (and best!) cast in a brand new adventure set a long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away. The Force feels strong with this one.



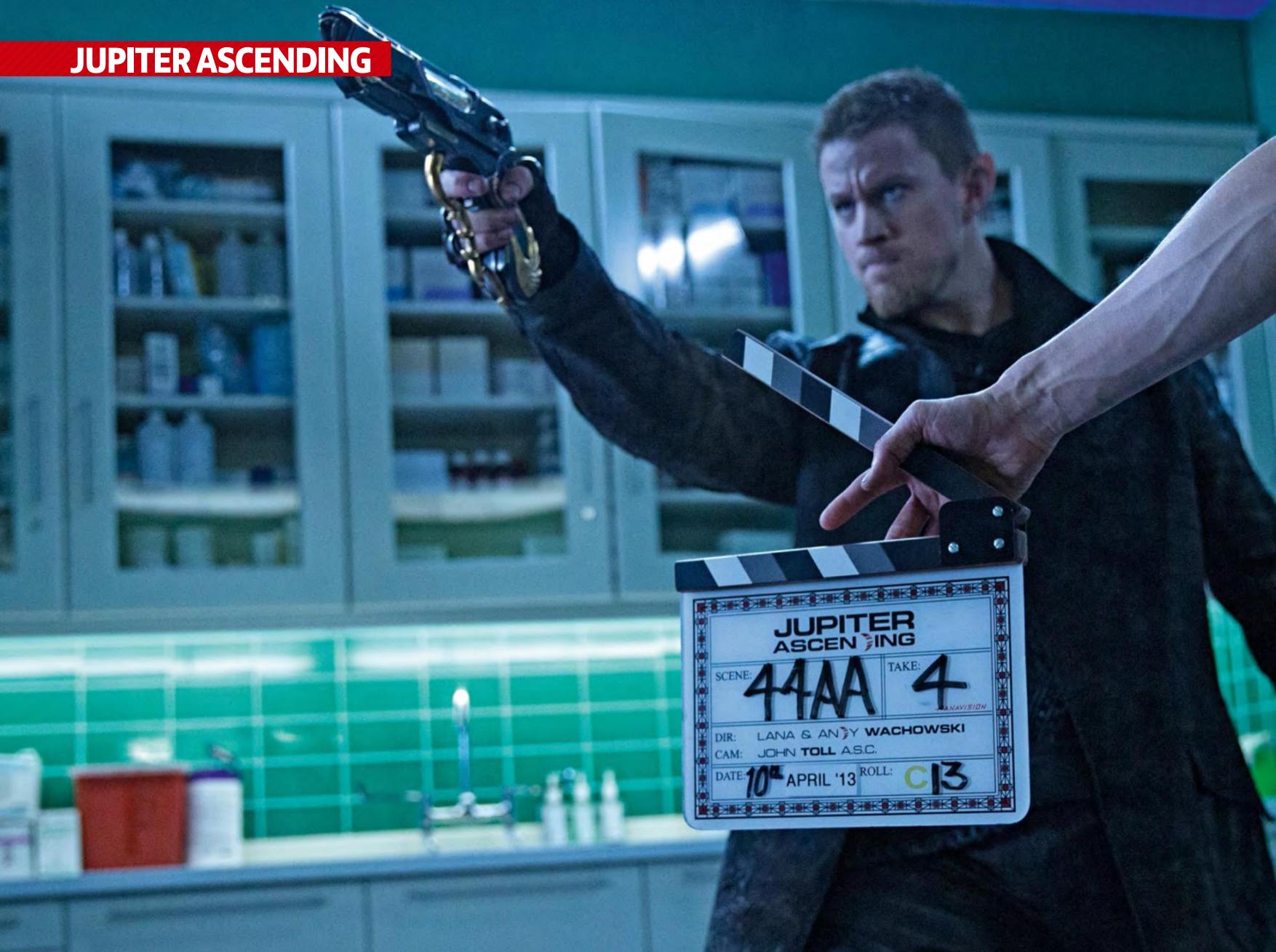
## THE FREEDOM FIGHTER! THE HUNGER GAMES: MOCKINGJAY PART TWO (OPENS 20 NOVEMBER)

From underdog to champion fighter, Katniss Everdeen is back for one final bout of hungry gaming. This time around she's leading the revolution against the Capitol. But will she make it out alive?

After the first two hugely entertaining and successful films (and a third arriving at the end of 2014), it would be very surprising – and disappointing – if this didn't end the series on a high. But that's not likely. *Catching Fire*'s Francis Lawrence will continue on as director and, of course, the cast remains the same and consistently excellent.

Sure, questions can be raised about the necessity of splitting one book into two movies – a decision that can be seen as a blatantly cynical attempt to drain as much money from fans as possible – but it does at least give the series room to breathe. *Mockingjay* (the novel) has a lot going on, and two movies should make for a fittingly epic conclusion. And with the weight of three profitable previous films behind it, it's entirely possible that this could be bigger than even *The Avengers*...





# JUPITER ASCENDING

WORDS JAMIE GRAHAM

They changed cinema with *The Matrix* and now they're exploring new frontiers in space opera. We explore the Wachowskis' latest venture into a wholly different universe

**T**he movie calendar is punctuated by "event movies" but the real event is when an original product jostles its way onto a release slate dominated by sequels, prequels, spin-offs, reboots, remakes and reimaginings. If studios are betting \$100-\$250m on a blockbuster, they want to be sure they help themselves to the best odds available, meaning recognisable franchises are the safest bet.

Not so *Jupiter Ascending*. Five years ago, Jeff Robinov, the then-President of Warner Bros Pictures, approached the Wachowskis about creating an entirely new universe – and, by

extension, franchise. They had, after all, imagined *The Matrix* trilogy into a more-than-solid \$1.6bn for the studio's coffers.

Development began on Andy and Lana's brand-new brain(star)child two years later, with the production and visual effects teams working up the Wachowskis' strange visions from a first draft of a script that got everyone excited ("That's one of the big changes with visual effects in the last few years – it's not strictly a post-production process any more," says Visual Effects Supervisor Dan Glass). The elaborate practical stunts and their VFX



Caine (Channing Tatum) comes to the rescue.

**'I play a character called Stinger. I've got remnants of bee, or half-bee'**

**SEAN BEAN**

who learns she possesses the genetic legacy to become the queen of the universe when the matriarch of the House of Abrasax, ruler of all known life, dies. Scooped up from her menial, meaningless life by Channing Tatum's genetically engineered ex-military hunter Caine, she sets about claiming her inheritance... but Abrasax siblings Balem, Kalique and Titus (Eddie Redmayne, Tuppence Middleton and Douglas Booth) aren't about to let the crown slip from their grubby fingers without an almighty fight involving spaceships, pounded-to-powder architecture and, er, rollerblades (more of which later).

#### **WITH GREAT POWER...**

"Jupiter's not a superhero, she's your average, everyday girl who, due to her DNA, inherits a power," explains a kohl-eyed Kunis, a self-confessed *Star Trek* nut who nabbed the part after Natalie Portman was originally linked with it. Sat next to Channing Tatum on a white leather sofa in a spacious LA studio, she's dressed in smart black trousers, a sheer cream top and 6in heels, her sharp outfit not matched by her tongue whatever some journalists might have written in the past. She's confident, yes, opinionated, sure, and talks in a surprisingly loud voice, but it's doubtful anyone would mistake her dauntless refusal to be media-trained for an acidic attitude if she was a male star. "She's a twenty-something who's complacent in life," she continues. "She's lazy, doesn't really know what she wants to do. She doesn't like her job but she's not trying to do anything else. She thinks that she's lame. No aspirations. Then in comes Channing's character, who introduces her to her destiny..."

augmentation, meanwhile, were tested while the directors shot their futuristic segments of *Cloud Atlas* in Berlin.

So what have the Wachowskis actually dreamed up? Well, it's no good asking the filmmakers themselves: not only are they increasing press-phobic, but they seem to enjoy the air of mystery that surrounds them, adding to their reputation as reclusive visionaries (it never did Kubrick and Malick any harm, after all). "They're so good that you never actually see them," jokes *Jupiter Ascending*'s leading man, Channing Tatum. "They wear cloaking devices."

In fact, very little is out there about their new film – a phenomenon that's as pleasing as it is frustrating in this age of media saturation. What we do know, however, is that beneath *Jupiter Ascending*'s shimmering, future-of-cinema visuals is the core of a good old-fashioned space opera and an archetypal hero(ine) story that recalls the journey of Luke Skywalker and many protagonists who've gone before.

Mila Kunis plays Jupiter Jones, a lowly housecleaner on Earth (Chicago, to be exact)

"My character is a hybrid, a splice of human DNA and a wolf, or what would be a wolf in space," says Tatum, a "fan" of the Wachowskis who met them for a chat then signed on without pause. Himself looking the business in pastel chinos and striped t-shirt that clings to an imposing, muscles-on-top-of-muscles frame, he's relaxed and softly-spoken. "Yeah, there's definitely something animalistic about him, the rage or something. There's not so much a conflict within him as... Um, I don't want to give too much away."

Kunis cuts in: "It's more of a conflict between him and other humans, between him and humanity itself," she explains.

Wait, backtrack. Wolf? Neither of the film's two stars will embellish, though it seems this interplanetary canvas that the Wachowskis have created posits a human race spliced with various beasts. Birds are mentioned once or twice, with no real context. Then Sean Bean sits down and chuckles in a curveball...

"I play a character called Stinger," he starts. "I've kind of got remnants of bee, or half-bee, but not so bad that I'm flying around with buzzy wings, y'know?" Er, not really... "He's got special vision, he's very quick, which helps in combat situations, and bees are very true, very faithful. Stinger is a pretty good guy, a tough guy. He was in the military and he fought with Channing's character. They fought together. Unfortunately, Caine was in some trouble and I stood up for him, and they removed my wings."

Fair enough. So how does Stinger fit into the unfolding story? "I'm in a shack on a farm on Earth, in exile. Channing comes back to make amends. My first instinct is to want to knock his head off. And I do [laughs]. We have a big fight and then we come to some agreement. And that's when Jupiter turns up, and I recognise her as true royalty, the queen. She can change the world. Stinger's loyalty from then on is with her."

What soon becomes clear when talking to the cast is that a great deal of trust was involved in the making of this film. No one, it seems, is entirely clear of what *Jupiter Ascending* is, or is about

("Well, the underlying theme of the film is – and I guess I can say this – consumption," offers Kunis. "How humans have the desire to consume more than you can provide"), though everyone is in no doubt that the Wachowskis will build a world unlike any we've seen.

Dan Glass and producer Grant Hill, both of whom have worked with the filmmakers since *The Matrix* movies, individually stress that the Wachowskis never repeat themselves. Whether they succeed (*The Matrix*, plus parts of *Reloaded*, *Revolutions* and *Cloud Atlas*) or not (*Speed Racer*), >>>



Brit Eddie Redmayne plays baddie Balem.

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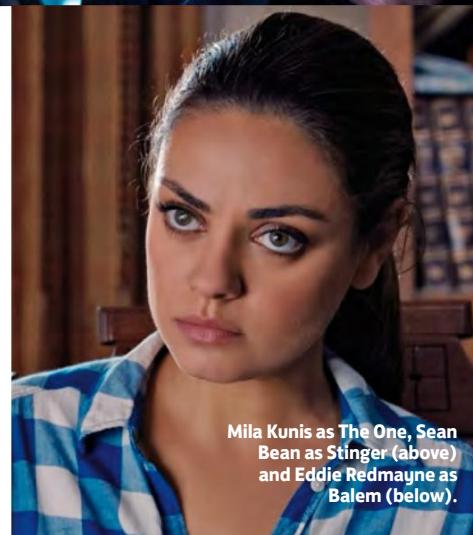
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# JUPITER ASCENDING



Jupiter Jones (Mila Kunis) embraces her destiny.



their mission is to reinvent and attain new levels of technical audacity with each fresh project. *Jupiter Ascending* is a totally new take on the design of multiple environments within space," promises Hill, while Glass stresses the visual influences come not from sci-fi touchstones but from cities around Europe. "Look at the complexity and juxtaposition of architectural styles," he says. "You have a renaissance structure next to something that's modern glass, next to something that's got a gothic feel to it."

Again from the trailers, and a gallery of glossy stills hanging on the wall above the cast's heads, it seems this gaudy, polished, soaring, crowded, rambunctious universe is devised of



shiny spaceships hurtling between towering superstructures on distant stars. One thing's for sure: the action will be spectacular.

## SLIP SLIDIN' AWAY

Tatum sits forward. "It was completely original choreography, so it wasn't like we had to learn kung fu," he says. "I slide up and down walls, and buildings, and glide through the air." Ah, that would be the glowing hover boots he's wearing in the trailer... Tatum grins. "I was out there six weeks before we started, just trying to create new things that you haven't seen before. Gravity doesn't exist, obviously, so you're trying to figure out different ways to create. Is it just wires? Do you put bouncy shoes on my feet? Do you put rollerblades on? There's nothing that goes from skating straight to sideways, so they created these, um, boots that did that. It was intense. I was skating up walls and across the ceiling. There's not a technique to learn how to do that. It's trial and error. There were definitely some fails."

Kunis breaks into the conversation. "He's always rescuing me. I'm either in this position [flops down on the sofa], or on his back, his side... I'm always attached to him, so if we didn't like each other we'd be in real trouble!" she says. "But I fight! In that fire sequence [points to a still on the wall that is mostly flames], where I look like a badass and I'm wearing leather – because people who are badass wear leather! – I fight. Other times I'm in that blue chequered shirt [points to a still of Jupiter standing still] and it's 'Oh, I'm so innocent'. Then: 'I'm in leather, holy shit, check me out, I'm badass!'"

"I did quite a bit," adds Bean. "Channing did a hell of a lot, because he was flying around, flipping. He's a very athletic guy – he's done a lot of dancing, martial arts. I was just running!"

To help the actors get a grip on the images floating through the Wachowskis' minds, a lot of practical sets were built, or at least foregrounds ready to be expanded upon with pixels. Lana, who works closely with the actors while Andy more closely tends the technical side, would offer a running commentary, telling her cast to duck or grimace because such-and-such was whizzing past their left ear and so forth. "They were like, 'Trust me, it'll work in the end,'" explains Bean. "I've never seen anyone so immersed in what they're doing. It's a fantastic visual adventure, astonishing scale, mesmerising, like being on a trip, but it's also something where the audience will be able to identify with the characters, get to know them, like them. A lot of attention was given towards the drama. It's not just one-dimensional characters running about shooting each other!"

Tatum, Kunis and Bean all agree there is sequel potential, though Bean won't reveal if Stinger will be around to take part in any ongoing installments (the actor, of course, is famous for his many screen deaths). They might not be exactly sure what *Jupiter Ascending* is, and the Wachowskis might not be around to ask, but they do know it is the biggest project that any of them have been involved in – some claim, given Kunis did *Oz The Great And Powerful*, Tatum the *G.I. Joe* movies, and Bean *The Fellowship Of The Ring*. This is groundbreaking stuff, they pledge, and their excitement is infectious.

"There are these huge dinosaur-type splices in the movie," Tatum blurts, "and they're literally on these jumpers, so they can, like, bound, and do all these crazy martial arts..." He stops, suddenly, realising he might have said too much. It doesn't matter. We're sold.

*Jupiter Ascending* opens on 6 February.

# HIGH RISE

A tour of Ben Wheatley's claustrophobic cautionary tale, from the ground up

WORDS RICHARD JORDAN

## LEVEL 6

**SUMMER 2014** Shooting starts in Belfast, Northern Ireland for a release sometime during 2015.

## LEVEL 5

**MAY 2014** Jeremy Irons and Sienna Miller are announced to be playing the building's architect and his assistant, rounding out what looks like Wheatley's most A-list cast yet. "I've been a fan of Sienna's since seeing her heartbreaking role in *Factory Girl*," says Wheatley. "There's a steely resilience in her performances, and I know she will be excellent. And what can you say about Jeremy Irons? From *Dead Ringers* to *Margin Call*, Jeremy has been creating indelible performances. He's one of our finest actors and it's very exciting to work with him."

## LEVEL 4

**FEBRUARY 2014** Wheatley releases a teaser poster via Twitter and announces that Tom Hiddleston will play the lead role of Dr. Robert Laing, a medic who finds himself seduced by the tower block's seemingly utopian lifestyle.

## LEVEL 3

**AUGUST 2013** *Kill List* director Ben Wheatley announces that he will follow up *A Field In England* with *High Rise*, from a script by his wife Amy Jump and Thomas once again on board as producer. "I love Ballard's work," says Wheatley, who reveals his version will be set in '70s Britain. "The scope of the film is exciting. It will be challenging, but it's not as dark as *Kill List*. The book is pretty out there, though."

## LEVEL 2

**MAY 2009** One month after Ballard's death, *Cube* and *Splice* director Vincenzo Natali announces that he's working on a new adaptation. The plot synopsis and teaser poster reveal Natali has updated the location from inner-city London to an idyllic island in the middle of the ocean, but the project never gets off the ground.

## LEVEL 1

**LATE 1970s** British producer Jeremy Thomas options the novel and hires Nicolas Roeg (*Don't Look Now*, *The Man Who Fell To Earth*) to direct. When financing for the project falls through, the pair move on to make thriller *Bad Timing*, while *High Rise* drifts into development limbo.

## GROUND FLOOR

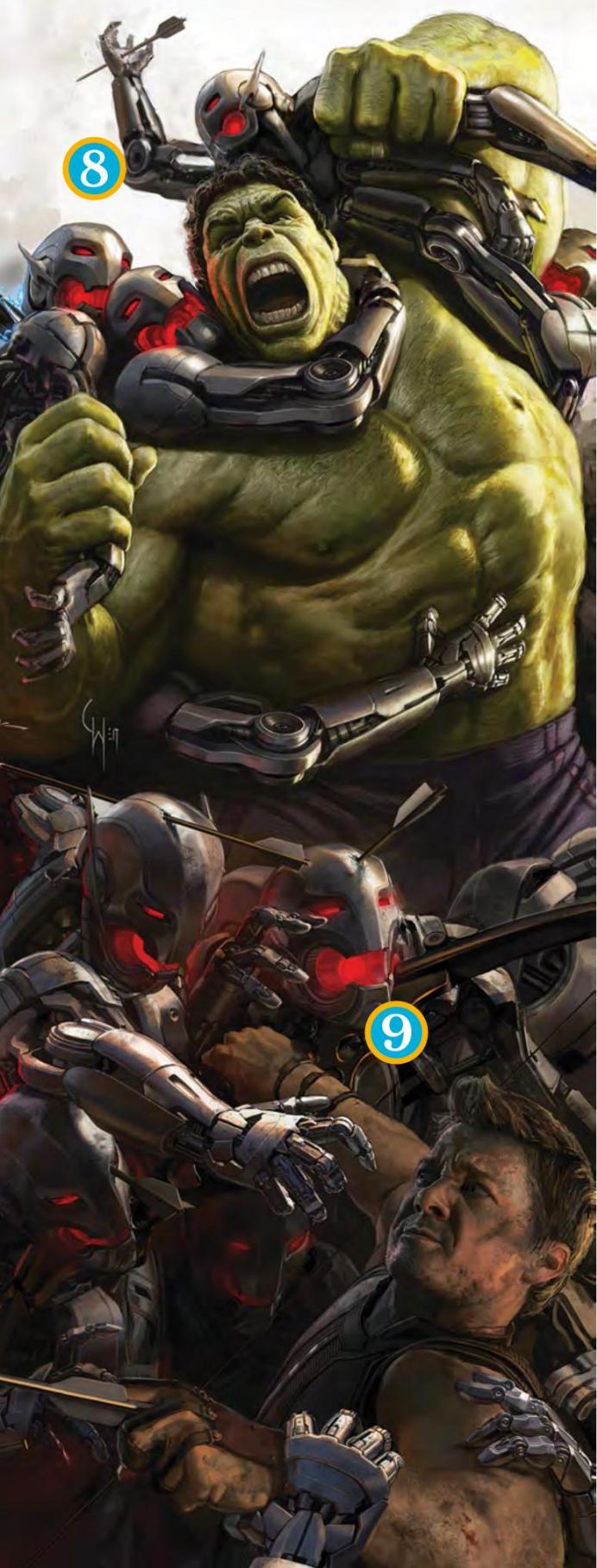
**1975** New wave sci-fi writer J. G. Ballard publishes *High Rise*. Set inside a luxury tower block, the story tells of a closed community, isolated from the outside world, that becomes more divided and violent as the residents turn on each other. Think an adult *Lord Of The Flies*...



# AVENGERS: AGE OF



# ULTRON



Who's who, who's new... status updates from the cast of Marvel's mightiest movie yet...



**W**e've got a real nice movie coming for you next year," teased Robert Downey Jr. at this year's Comic-Con – where the concept art opposite was spectacularly unveiled. Featuring an epic (climactic?) ruck between the A-team and Ultron's robo-army, it also provides the first semi-reveal of The Vision, hovering top-left and about to wade into 2015's biggest, busiest comic-booker.

## 1 THE VISION

"It's the most exciting thing that's ever happened to my children," quips Paul Bettany of trading up his voice gig as J.A.R.V.I.S. for some caped action as super-android (or "synthetoid") The Vision, a comics staple since 1968. He's keeping mum about the characters' relationship, except to confirm "there is one".

## 2 THOR

Hoisting the hammer for the fourth time in *Age Of Ultron*, Chris Hemsworth has revealed his biggest wish for Thor: "To turn him into a woman," a nod to the comics' recent gender-bending development. "I don't want to jinx anything, but that could be my Oscar," he adds.

## 3 QUICKSILVER

From *Kick-Ass* to quick-ass, Aaron Taylor-Johnson is finding his Marvel debut "overwhelming and surreal," despite his superhero previous. But he digs being part of a team where "everyone sort of stands out... they bounce off each other and there's a journey." En route, we can expect "happy and sad moments".

## 4 IRON MAN

"I become a little less significant every year," says Robert Downey Jr. of the ever-growing Marvel gang. "Which is fine. Because they're all just so damn good!" Elizabeth Olsen's Scarlet Witch has made a special impact: "She actually cast a spell on me two weeks ago," he reveals. "It burns," adds Jeremy Renner, ambiguously.

**'I become a little less significant every year. Which is fine. Because they're all so good!'**

**ROBERT DOWNEY JR.**

## 5 CAPTAIN AMERICA

Good news is, WW2 hero Cap is no longer a man out of time: "We're past him being amazed at cell phones," says Chris Evans. Bad news is, "he's still looking for a place to belong" after the S.H.I.E.L.D. hit the fan in *The Winter Soldier*.

## 6 BLACK WIDOW

*AOU* will (finally) explore the Widow's backstory, says Scarlett Johansson: "These characters all have a past, and hers is a very complex one." She'll also get "some pretty good toys", not least a state-of-the-art electric Harley Davidson.

## 7 SCARLET WITCH

Quicksilver's sister brings a fresh element to the game: magic. "It adds something epic to the fights," reveals Marvel newbie and *Godzilla* star Elizabeth Olsen. "It's not just awesome punching."

## 8 HULK

The eternal internal battle between Bruce Banner and his alter ego will hit new heights in *Age Of Ultron*. Off-screen, big green's already won: "People just shout 'YO HULK!' at me on the street," says Mark Ruffalo.

## 9 HAWKEYE

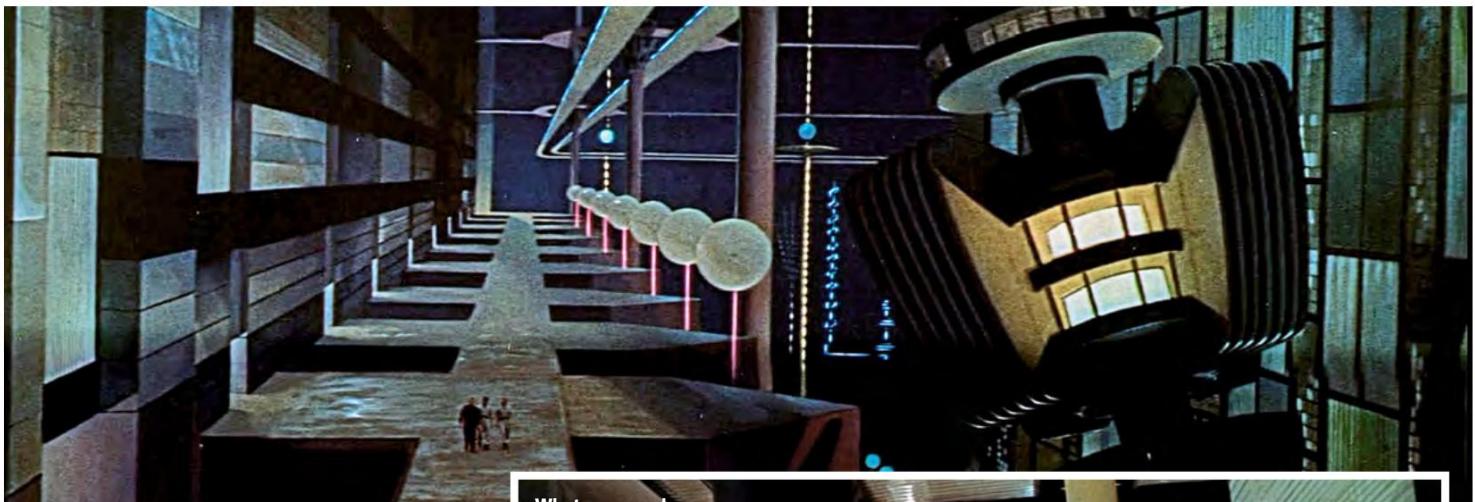
The badass bowman will have more screen time – and more team interaction – in *AOU*. Meanwhile, Jeremy Renner has revealed how RDJ convinced him to become an Avenger: "He washed my car in a thong. I have photographs..." End-credits spoiler?

WE LOVE SCI-FI!

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF TIMELESS SF

# FORBIDDEN PLANET

Admiring the out-of-this-world **KRELL MACHINERY** from the 1950s classic



DAVE GOLDER IS A FORMER EDITOR OF SFX AND ITS WEBSITE

“Prepare your minds for a new scale of physical scientific values, gentlemen,” promises Professor Morbius

in *Forbidden Planet*. He wasn’t kidding.

As a 10-year-old boy, the first time I saw the Krell machinery buried under the surface of the planet Altair IV, the experience was quite literally awesome. Years later, when I was studying Film at university, one of our essay topics was “Is spectacle a prerequisite for science fiction movies?” My judgement was skewed; all I could think about was that first encounter with the Krell machinery, the sheer jawdropping scale of what I witnessed, and the only answer I wanted to give was “Yes.” Sadly, my tutor required another 4,999 words.

I can honestly, truthfully, say no other special effects sequence has ever affected me in the same way. Sure, partly that was my (impressionable) age but honestly, even today, when Morbius stands on that bridge across the ventilation shaft, pointing up and saying, “Seventy-eight hundred levels,” I believe him. When he tells you the machine is “a cube 20 miles on each side” I believe him.

And though there’s something dated about the machinery’s crystal-radio-set-stylings,



there's also something wonderfully unique and alien about the design too. Before steampunk, *Forbidden Planet* had created Tesla-punk, a fetishisation of the electricity substation aesthetic (it's a crying shame it never caught on). But married to that there's a weird art deco sensibility, and even a touch of cubism. It's both of its time and out of this world.

Even watching it today I get something of a shiver down my back. That may be nostalgia, but I'm certainly no CG luddite. I love what

true artists can do with computers; special effects are only as good as the creators behind them, whether they're wielding pixels or paintbrushes. And you can feel in every frame that the guys who put together the Krell machinery – the matte painters, the model makers, the director, the FX compositors – were striving to make the best use possible of the tools at their disposal. And 60 years on, the results prove it was most definitely all worth the effort.

## FACT ATTACK!

- The main ventilation shaft was a model, filmed on its side.
- The other main chamber was a matte painting.
- The “bridge” was a practical set that stretched across the entire floor of one of MGM’s studios.
- The electricity sparks were animated by Joshua Meador, who also created the Monster from the Id.

➤ Part of the power of the Krell machinery scenes comes from Bebe and Louis Barron’s extraordinary electronic score, which existed somewhere between sound effects and mood music. The Musicians’ Union would not let them have a “music by” credit (instead they were credited for “electronic tonalities”) thus denying them the chance of an Oscar nom.

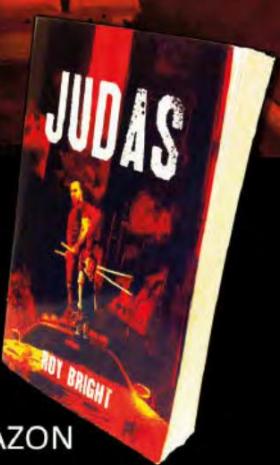
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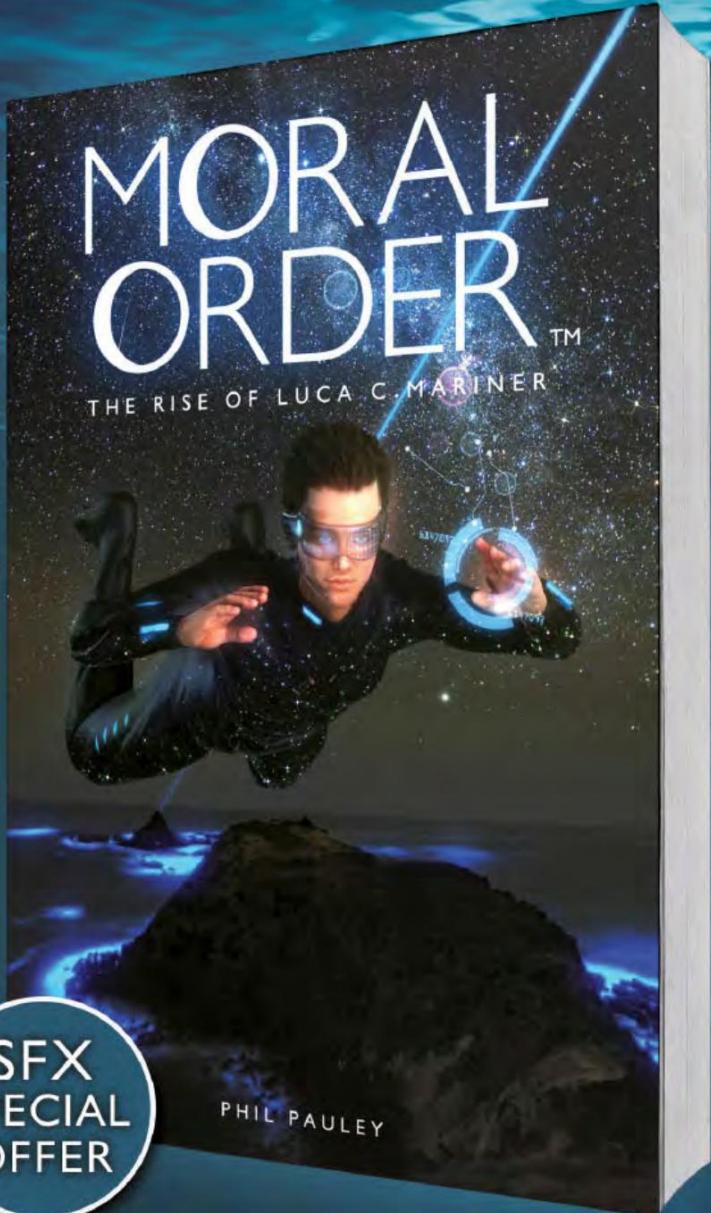


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